



We are now beginning to record and classify the best of our American folk art. Being snubbed was the spur we needed to order the art of Southerners and artists of Appalachia will be considered and represented in the next exhibition of American folk art. Being snubbed was the spur we needed to do what we should have done in the first place.

To all who contributed to making this exhibition and shorthorns will have been well rewarded.

Could it be that Southern Appalachian folk art was truly inferior to eastern and northern folk art? Had the organizers seen out quills, toys, sculpture, pottery, baskets, furniture and other items of household and commercial use?

Richmond and San Francisco where it was equally well received. A delightful big book with superb color photographs and illustrations made the one valuable reminder of the exhibition as the one previous object— which are rarely allowed to travel— are now returned to their home collections. At first we were slightly annoyed when it appeared that nearly percent of the folk at assembled came from New England, New York, and Pennsylvania with only a few pieces from Williamsburg and Chartersown and even less from Southem Appalachia— particularly since a grant from the Philip Morris Tobacco Company of Richmond made the show rather than historical ones. The show later travelled to universities rather than historical ones.

The Whinmey's Folk Art Exhibition was organized by Jean Liipman and Alice Winchesser, two connoisseurs of great taste who are also great scholars in their field. Marcel Breuer, the famous architect, designed the installation emphasizing visual art seen in a more esthetic relationship.

The achievement that is revealed to us in this exhibition is such that it needs—and in many respects, overshadows—the high art of the period, the art produced by professional artists trained in their chosen vocation. Beyond this it provides, like many of the great American artists, a new and revised view of the world, a new and revised view of history. Furthermore, the self-sacrifice of these fine artists will have to be reckoned with.

Kramer, almost overwhelmed by the sheer style and expression he found in "this garden of visual wonders," concluded his review as follows:

Two extraordinary and memorable exhibitions a few years ago at the Whitemy Museum of American Art helped to open our eyes; namely, the survey of North American Indian art in 1972 and "The Powering of America" Folk Art 1776-1876," in 1974. These dramatic and illuminating exhibitions removed their subjects from the realm of ethnographic history and placed them firmly in the esthetic arena. Hilton Kramer in his New York Times review of February 1, 1974 hailed the later exhibition as an event of considerable importance in the history of American folk art. In this hierarchy of esthetic experience, the folk artists were able to wrest from their wacky situation "an incredible purity of expression, and it is this that speaks to us with such force—and to us with such force."

Some background information, however, is necessary just for the record on this first Appalachian Consortium traveling exhibition of Appalachian Art.

THE MANY INDIVIDUALS and the eleven institutions responsible for assembling this exhibition agreed that no introduction was necessary or would be provided. The art and critics would speak for themselves. In keeping with this cavet no foreword interpretations, evaluations or judgments are offered. Basic descriptions and dimensions for the art are provided. Acknowledgements for assistance in assembling the exhibition.



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## Appalachian Consortium

407 East Howard Street, Boone, N.C. 28607

(704) 262-2064

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*Special thanks to Jody Higgins*

*Special thanks to the Waynesville Mountaineer*

*"Shavings" art by Shelton Wilder III*

*“I don’t guess there’s too many people that could make them anymore. Most of ’em nowadays uses some sort of metal band. It’s pretty hard to set down and cut one of them bands to where he locks hisself in there and holds.”*

IRIS HARMON, *woodworker*, speaking of his hickory-banded butter churns



495  
prising the artiodactyls. [NL; see ARTIODACTYL]

**art-i-san** (är'ti zän), *n.* 1. one skilled in an applied art; a craftsman. 2. *Obs.* an artist. [< F < It *artigian(o)* < L *artif(us)*, trained in arts and crafts (ptp. of *artire*; see ART<sup>1</sup>, -ITE<sup>2</sup>) + It -iano (< L -iānus) -IAN] —*ar/ti-san-al, adj.* —*ar/ti-san-ship*', *n.*

—*Syn.* 1. See *artist*.

**art-ist** (är'tist), *n.* 1. one who produces works in any of the arts that are primarily subject to aesthetic criteria. 2. a person who practices one of the fine arts, esp. a painter or sculptor. 3. one whose trade or profession requires a knowledge of design, drawing, painting, etc.: a *commercial artist*. 4. a person who works in one of the performing arts, as an actor, musician, or singer; a public performer: a *mime artist*; *an artist of the dance*. 5. one who exhibits exceptional skill in his work. 6. one who is expert at trickery or deceit: *He's an artist with cards*. 7. *Obs.* an artisan. [< ML *artist(a)* master of arts. See ART<sup>1</sup>, -IST]

—*Syn.* 1. ARTIST, ARTISAN are persons having superior skill or ability, or are capable of a superior kind of workmanship. An ARTIST is a person engaged in some type of fine art. An ARTISAN is engaged in a craft or applied art.

**art-i-sté** (är tēst'; Fr. är tēst'), *n., pl. -tistes (-tēsts'; Fr. -tēst').* an artist, esp. an actor, singer, dancer, or other public performer. [< F; see ARTIST]

**art-is-tic** (är tis'tik), *adj.* 1. conforming to the standards of art; satisfying aesthetic requirements: *artistic productions*. 2. showing skill or excellence in execution: *artistic workmanship*. 3. exhibiting taste, discriminating judgment, or sensitivity: *an artistic arrangement of flowers*; *artistic handling of a delicate diplomatic situation*. 4. exhibiting an involvement in or appreciation of art, esp. the fine arts: *He had wide-ranging artistic interests*. 5. involving only aesthetic considerations, usually taken as excluding moral, practical, religious, political, or similar concerns: *artistic principles*. 6. of, like, or thought of as characteristic of an artist: *an artistic temperament*. Also, *art-is/ti-cal*. [ARTIST + -IC]

—*art-is/ti-cally*, *adv.*

**art-is-tic direc'tor**, a person who is responsible for the administration of a theater or ballet company, opera house, etc. Also called *artis/tic admin'istrator*, *art director*.

text and photography

by David Gaynes

ARTISANS/ APPALACHIA/ USA

*"I'll tell you what. Lot of people these days don't know what they're working for.*

*"We've been through every age- The Stone Age; The Iron Age; The Machine Age; The Atomic Age; and now the Space Age and the Computer Age put together, only to find ourselves smack in The Money Age. The Money Age. It's got to where a feller won't speak no more than twelve words to you unless there's money in it.*

*"You don't s'posed to be a-doin' things just for money.*

*"Me, I work because I like to work."*

EDD PRESNELL, *dulcimer-maker*



*Copperwork,  
housewares,  
unknown,  
coffee pot, height: 9 1/4"; cream pitcher, height: 6"; water bucket, height: 8"; dipper, diameter: 5".  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Blue Ridge Institute)*

**A. LINCOLN GUSLER (1900- )/COPPERSMITH**

## SHAVINGS



—Are there people around here who've tasted what came out of Lincoln's stills?

“Oh yes,” says Mike.

—Did you ever yourself?

“I guess I used some of his work. I know I used his worms and caps. I can't say I ever used one of his stills.”

—So you've known Lincoln professionally?

“Oh yes.”

Ted pulls out a leather wallet. A hand-tooled scene on it's face depicts with great accuracy the construction of a working still. As he runs his finger along its surface, Ted points out the parts: here, the cap; there the doubling barrel, the mash-boxes, the condenser.

“An old boy in the penitentiary made that,” Ted explains. “He was in there for using one.”

It comes out that Ted used to make stills himself. “That's how come I knew about them mash-boxes,” he says.

Mike offers, “I guess this room wouldn't hold all the stills that you made.” Ted looks around. “No, it never would.”

“There was nothing about that work to be ashamed of,” Ted asserts. “I used to do hammer-work—beating on them stills of Lincoln's we're talking about. Made about four dollars a day doing that, I think.”

“Well, one man couldn't make one by hisself, you see. Not



*Ted Boyd (with customer) and Mike Manuca.*

them big stills, because one man had to drive the rivets in while the other held an old iron agin the other end—that's what I did mostly. That was noisy work.

“And when we made them coils we used English rosin. We'd boil that rosin—melt it—squirt it in that pipe and let it get cold. We'd pour it in today and bend the pipes tomorrow. That would keep the pipes from crushing together. Used to wrap them pipes around a big stump.”

“Yeah, I made whiskey all my life,” Mike says. “Ted and I used to work together a whole lot.”

—Did the law know about it but just not bother you?

“NO! They'd try to bother the hell out you.”

—How did you get around it?

“I run,” Ted says. “If you didn't run you'd go to jail.”

Mr. Gusler has recently sustained a stroke and cannot speak clearly. On a quiet afternoon here in Ted Boyd's barbershop, Ted and his old crony Mike Manuca speak of their friend Lincoln Gusler.

(please see above)

For years this was whiskey-making country.

"Ninety percent of the people on this mountain made whiskey," Mike reports. "It was all you had to make a living off of. There was no factories or nothing. When I was a boy that was all we done."

This illicit industry gave Lincoln his start in copperwork. He made "big stuff—" whole stills, and their major component parts: the tops and condensers called "caps and worms" by those who use them.

"The man was pretty good," claims Mike. He was better at that still-making than this toy stuff he's made. I think his heart was more in it. But he got old and didn't do that no more. Wasn't no demand for it to amount to nothing. He's been quit seven-eight years."



*Mr. Gusler's copper fiddle and copper bow-tie.*

"Course he made them buckets and pans and stuff all along," Ted says. "He made cooking vessels out of copper. But I don't think he sold much of it back then. There was more money in stills. A big worm, forty-fifty foot long made out of two-inch copper tubing, he made pretty good off them."

Ted and Mike talk about the particulars of this life: the steam pumps pushing water up into the hidden hills where stills ran off fifty cases a day; the rough looking Ford sedans with concealed 200-gallon tanks for the lightning and a brand-new Cadillac motor up front; the prisons where hapless distillers were sent to meditate on the wisdom of defying Uncle Sam's tax laws.

(continued on back)



*photo by Roddy Moore*

**Ferrum, Virginia 24088**

**A. LINCOLN GUSLER (1900- )/COPPERSMITH**

A. Lincoln Gusler is a man of respect in this world. He did good work, he never got caught, and he was successful—even a little tight, some thought. Local legend has it that Lincoln gave his children a nickel if they skipped their breakfast and then charged them a dime for dinner.

But if Lincoln was tight with his money, he withheld no effort to help his friends and neighbors.

“Accommodatin’est fellow around,” Ted says of him. “He’d quit his work anytime to help you. Yessir.

“When a fellow would die around here—that’s before they ever got these back-hoes to dig ‘em with—Lincoln’d be the first man there and the last to leave a ‘diggin’ the grave, wouldn’t he Mike?”

“Yep.”

Upside Down Doll,  
*Alice and the White Rabbit*,  
1968,  
height: 17",  
dacron-stuffed cotton and knitting wool hair.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$18)



Shown here are two photographic views of the same "upside down doll."

AGGIE LOWRANCE (1900- ) / DOLL-MAKER/DESIGNER

"Why indeed yes!" replies Aggie Lowrance when asked if her dolls are original designs. "Everything that I ever made, I never



*"So I put on my thinking cap and I thought now how in the world will I get Hansel and Gretel and the Witch onto one doll?"*

Route 1, Box 271

Banner Elk, North Carolina 28604

had a pattern. I would just think on it and come up with what I wanted. Usually I sleep on it and then cut my material in the morning."

One of Aggie's most distinctive designs—perhaps her trademark—is her "upside-down doll." Aggie designed her first such doll some nine years ago, inspired by a children's storybook.

"I was on the Board of Directors of the Foundation for Community Development," Aggie recalls. "I always rode the bus between Boone and Durham, went to the meeting in the evening, and then stayed overnight. That gave me time in the morning before taking the bus back.

"One morning I went into a bookstore and looked at different stories. I saw the story about Hansel and Gretel and the Witch. So I put on my thinking cap and I thought now how in the world will I get Hansel and Gretel and the Witch onto one doll?"

"I done my designing on how I wanted them all to be. Then I sat down and made half of the doll with no legs and put Hansel and Gretel back-to-back. I sewed them up down to where they stopped and then put the Witch there upside-down and joined them all together. I figured it'd take two skirts inside on another—one to cover the Witch and one for Hansel and Gretel.

"My boss (at the Foundation) saw the doll and got all excited. He said 'set up a sewing class and teach people how to make 'em,' so I did. Sometimes it took three days and sometimes it took four for them to catch on to making the doll. It depended on what design we were working on."

Aggie still teaches doll-making. By now she has designed quite a number of strikingly original dolls—mainstay items of the Blue Ridge Hearthside Crafts Association, Inc., and great hits at the nation's major craft shows.

Not a woman to let her "thinking cap" gather dust, Aggie says "When I'm happiest is when I'm designing and teaching others how to make these dolls."

Almost imperceptibly, the doll she is sewing smiles.

**AGGIE LOWRANCE (1900- ) /DOLL-MAKER/DESIGNER**



*Wildfowl carving,  
life-sized ruffed grouse,  
1971,  
height: 11", length: 14", tailspan: 12",  
basswood, linden and walnut.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artist)*

AL CALHOUN (1933- )/WOODCARVER/WILDFOWL

Al Calhoun is just plain glad. He's glad to meet you, to show you around, to talk and laugh and share his home.

It's hard to believe that this man was once "mean as a snake" but Al insists it's true. "Why I used to go around weighing about 127 pounds and jumping on six men at a time in bars," he says in earnest amazement.

"I used to be an introvert. I didn't like people—I didn't like myself, that was the problem. Then I got involved with crafts.

Craftspeople are the greatest people in the world. You can't beat 'em.

"I'll tell you what really straightened me out," Al says, and points skyward. "I figured out what my source of power was. I realized that if the Old Marster was big enough to put me here, he's big enough to take care of me. I just don't worry anymore—why should I?"

*(continued on back)*



Route 2, Box 137  
Moneta, Virginia 24121

*"This is home. This is me."*

**AL CALHOUN (1933- )/WOODCARVER/WILDFOWL**

"I injured my back in 1969. I used to be a body-and-fender man and I was good at it. I've always been good with my hands. In fact the last year I worked I made \$13,000 working twenty-five hours a week. But then I injured my back a second time and I was told I couldn't go back to work. I was in Roanoke Memorial Hospital, in a room with a man named John who was in bad shape—I mean he couldn't get out of bed to go to the bathroom.

"Well, I was laying there flat on my back, and you know when you're laying there like that there's no place to look but up. I was praying for myself when I got to thinking, 'what am I praying for myself for when there's a man in this room who really is in bad shapes. I started praying for John and pretty soon he said 'Al, something's happening.'

"I asked him about it and he said 'I'm serious—God is in this room.' He said he felt a coolness engulf his whole body and the room lit up like there was forty light bulbs all on at once. John said 'Al, we're leaving this hospital tomorrow.'

"Sure enough the doctors came in the morning, looked at John and pronounced his back healed. A little while later my doctor looked at me and sent me home."

At that point Al Calhoun turned to carving. He's never regretted it. Although his income has yet to equal that which he earned fixing bashed fenders, he's happier now and steadfast in his faith that things will always work out.

As Al reaches the climax in his story, the telephone on his shop wall rings. It is his daughter, calling from the nearby house. Al looks my way and laughs.

"No, he doesn't have any children. He's coming from the

college—you remember where Daddy taught this summer? . . . . We'll be right there. Goodbye, Pumpkin.

"Let's eat, friend," Al says with gusto.

The Calhoun home is 230 years old. Iron pothooks hang in the fireplace, relics of the time when this dwelling was a country inn. In keeping with that spirit we eat a mighty soup that Al has cooked and great hunks of ham.

After supper Al fetches his pride and joy, a ruffed grouse. The bird has captured first prize at the 1971 International Carving Show in Davneport, Iowa, and fourth prize in the World Championship Wildfowl Carving Show of the same year in Salisbury, Maryland. Al is still excited by these triumphs.

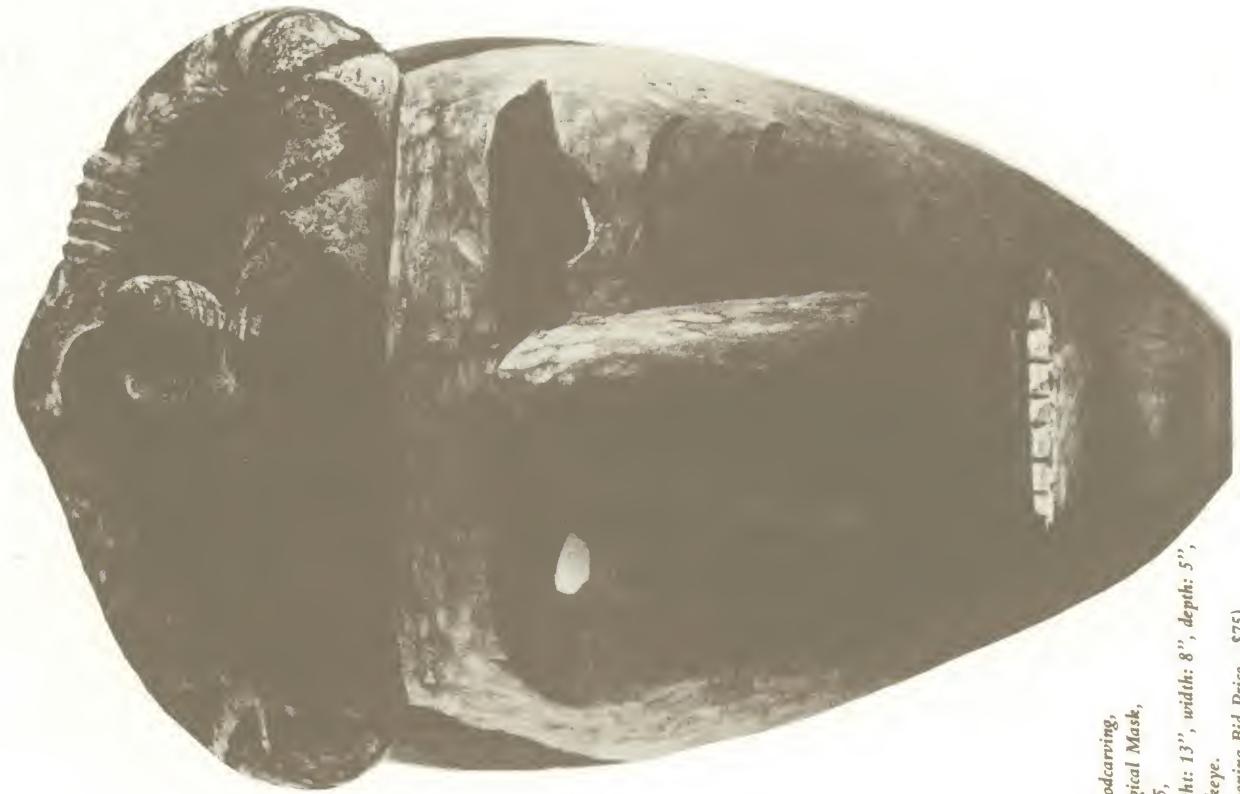
"When I won that fourth prize, behind three carvers with a combined total of eighty-five years experience—it like to blew my mind. I guess you could say that bird made me. Now when I go to shows people don't ask for Al Calhoun, they ask for the bird. Where's the bird? Where's the bird?"

I notice one toe missing and ask about it.

"After I carved it," Al explains, "it tried to fly away and I shot at it. That toe is all I got."

Al sits down in the big stuffed chair just off the kitchen table. Although he does machine-work in his well-appointed shop—"I don't guess anyone will shoot me for using power tools to take the big hunks off—" he spends his carving evenings here.

"This is home," Al says, sweeping the room with his gesturing arm. "This is me."

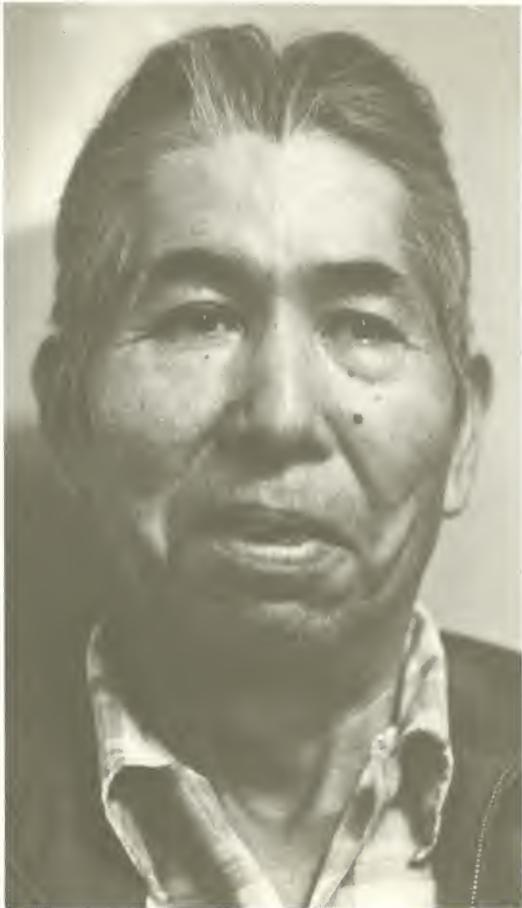


Woodcarving,  
*Magical Mask*,  
1975,  
height: 13", width: 8", depth: 5",  
buckeye.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$75)

ALLEN LONG (1917- )/MASK—MAKER



*The same day Allen Long bemoaned the passing of mask-makers, we spotted this seeming giant mask at left. Closer examination revealed that it was the back of a fiberglass shower-bath stall—one of dozens being installed at a roadside motel here. The mask-makers in Cherokee today are distant plumbing-fixture companies whose "magic" can be enjoyed for \$12.50 a night. Check-out time 11 a.m.*



c/o Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual, Inc.  
Box 277  
Cherokee, North Carolina 28719

Once, masks were a part of Cherokee life.

Masks were used in ceremonial dances and healing rituals. Hunters donned masks to summon good luck, and sometimes the very game itself. "The wildcat mask was used for stalking wild turkeys," one authority states. "You got behind a stump and waited for the turkey, and when the turkey wanted to know what it was, WHAM! you shot it."

Today all the turkeys are in the frozen-foods section and only one man among the Cherokees makes masks. He is Allen Long, the son of Will West Long. As Will was the last great Cherokee medicine man, Allen may be the last mask-maker. "I have six children," Allen says, but they're not interested in making masks. They never watched me make a mask."

Allen learned maskmaking from his father, who used masks in his healing and dancing. He learned to make the booger masks: the booger mask white man, the booger mask black man, the booger mask Indians. "These masks showed the different kind of people that would come into America," Allen explains. He saw the snake mask or "magical mask" at work, scaring evil spirits out of the afflicted. He watched Will turn a gourd into a long-nosed mask just to cut up in.

Every Saturday night there were great dances which lasted until the next day. These dances had spiritual import to the elders, but to Allen they were "just fun." "I was about twenty when they quit everything. They just quit all at once," Allen says.

For years Allen carried his special knowledge among a people that had lost their use for it.

Then the Indian Arts and Crafts Board commissioned Allen to carve a series of masks. Sold through Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual, an Indian-owned crafts cooperative, these masks were quickly sought by collectors and museums.

Now again, as in boyhood, Allen Long is a mask-maker.

*(continued on back)*

**ALLEN LONG (1917- )/MASK-MAKER**

"My father used red clay to color his masks," Allen remembers, "but today I use shoe polish because red clay sometimes comes off on your hands. I use buckeye wood and sometimes groundhog skin for my masks.

I let the buckeye wood dry out a long while before carving on it. The wood has to be completely dry before painting or the paint will come off. I saw the wood into 16" sections, and I can get two masks out of that."

Nobody don't much make masks anymore," Allen observes. "Mask-making is just about lost, but I'd rather work full-time on carving masks than work in a factory."

Despite his skills and background, this walking repository of history is hardly a sentimental man.

"I like this new way now," Allen says. "The best way to live is what it is now."



*Woodcarving,  
Acrobatic Bear,  
1972,  
height: 23",  
walnut.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of  
the Cherokee Museum)*

AMANDA CROWE (1928- )/SCULPTOR/CARVER



Woodcarving,  
Eagle Dancer,  
1957,  
height: 37",  
cherry.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Cherokee Museum)

"After I began carving and drawing at the age of four," Amanda Crowe has said, "I knew exactly what I wanted to do for the rest of my life!"

Amanda has made good her early prophesy, and linked together at least three generations of superb sculptor-carvers in the process.

The great Goingback Chiltoskey was Amanda's first teacher. From there, still in high school, she went on to art study in Chicago. Today Amanda confesses that "I read the books" during those years "but my mind was outside somewhere. I applied myself to the art but the rest was like water off a duck's back." Despite this disclaimer Amanda won a scholarship to the Chicago Art Institute, where she "worked in clay, built up figures in plaster, cut a few pieces in stone, wrought metal

sculpture and carved wood—" the last her "favorite sculpture material" to this day.

The Institute retained Amanda as a teaching fellow upon graduation and awarded her a Master of Fine Arts degree. Then Amanda won the John Quincy Adams fellowship for foreign study and journeyed to the Instituto Allende in San Miguel, Mexico, where she worked with Jose de' Creeft.

Twelve years after leaving, Amanda brought her prowess back home to the Cherokee Boundary. She has passed her skills on to the students of Cherokee High School for twenty-three years now, and trained such stellar young workers as John Wilnoky and Lloyd Carl Owle.

"Three or four of my students are professionals now," Amanda acknowledges. With no less pride she adds that "numbers of them supplement their income by carving. At least I know they don't have to go on welfare." Amanda's quick smile here is a matter-of-fact assessment of her gift to this community—a gift which extends beyond these school walls. After class and on weekends she often spends time with her students; hunting material for their carvings, sharing the outdoors, and just being accessible.

She points to a nearby student at work. "Frank over there, he won't need to go on welfare. Unless it's to buy wood." They both laugh.

Then the bell rings and a stampede ensues. The departing carvers pitch their weapons into a cigar box and Amanda's practiced eyes assess the growing pile. "Hold it!" she commands, "I'm still missing No 43!" A sheepish boy breaks from the herd and proffers the knife. "They'll arrest you and put you *under* the jail," Amanda warns, wagging the horn handle at the offender with a grin.

In the between-class lull I set up my tape-recorder on

(continued on back)



*While the class is quiet Amanda carves a soapstone*

Cherokee, North Carolina 28719

**AMANDA CROWE (1928- )/SCULPTOR/CARVER**

Amanda's desk. "If I try to write," I tell her, "I just end up scribbling and I can't read it later."

"Draw pictures," she pronounces, and is swept into the incoming flow of students.

With them enter a tanned, well-dressed middle-aged couple. They stand bewildered for a moment and then rush Amanda. "I *thought* you were Amanda Crowe!" the man gushes. "I have one of your bears and I wouldn't sell it back to you for ten *times* the price." Amanda receives her guests with no loss of equanimity, then turns back to her class. "Let's have some super action here," she exhorts with a handclap.

Through the period she circulates around the room, helping her charges over the rough spots, offering suggestions to the confused, revealing secrets of the blade and the chisel. In quiet moments Amanda carves a small soft stone. A steady stream of former students pass in and out, knowing they are welcome. Everyone is glad to be here.

Amanda Crowe could likely teach anywhere she wished to. Just today she has remarked that it would be easiest for her to round up examples of her work in New York or D.C.—and she is very well represented right here in Cherokee. Why, I ask her, has she chosen to teach all these years here in this high school?

"The main reason I'm here is because I like working with the kids," she answers simply. "To me that's a great pleasure."

As the bell rings and the students charge out of the room, one boy stays behind to speak with Amanda. Their words are lost in the din, but the quality of their conference is clear as they lean

into each other's thoughts. The student rests his hand on Amanda's ample shoulder. It is not a playful gesture, nor a bold one. It is simply an honest and unmediated gesture of closeness.

Amanda Crowe's "great pleasure" is sharing. And shared.



*Meditation*, 1948, height: 5 1/2", alabaster. (Not for Sale—Courtesy of Donald H. King)



*Marquetry,  
Grandfather Mountain,  
1975,  
15 1/4" x 18 1/4",  
made of nineteen native and exotic woods.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artists)*

**ANNA AND THAYER FRANCIS (1901- ) (1902- )/MARQUETARIANS**



*Marquetry,  
Dogwood,  
1975,  
14 1/4" x 12 1/4",  
walnut, burl walnut, holly, sycamore and cherry.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artists)*

Marquetry is the ancient art of creating pictures and designs with inlaid wood veneers. Its roots are lost in antiquity, though by the time of the Egyptian tombs there are examples of skilled marquetry. Today in this country, marquetry is being sustained



Route 1, Box 810  
Spruce Pine, North Carolina 28777

and revived by a small number of dedicated craftspeople.

Thayer and Anna Francis are two of them.

Making marquetry is like making a jigsaw puzzle-backwards. Whereas the puzzle-maker saws a whole picture to pieces, the marqueterian saws out fragile pieces in order to make a whole picture.

But first there must be the design: a tight, worked-out line drawing. It can have no "loose ends" because each line will be the border between pieces of wood. When Anna Francis is satisfied with a design, she traces it from her mylar original onto a material called "Scribe-Kote," and sends the Scribe-Kote copy to a Charlotte printer. Back comes a sheaf of blueprint-like patterns.

The Francis' learned about Scribe-Kote from a passing naval cartographer who suspected that it might be useful to them. "It is," Anna affirms. "Before we used an old technique called *pouncing* to make patterns. You pierce hundreds of tiny holes along each line of the original with a needle, tap asphalt dust through the holes onto another sheet of paper, and heat that dusted piece until the asphalt is fixed to it. It makes a wonderful pattern but it sure got tedious spending hours poking around with that sewing needle!"

That the paper design may come to life the Francis' comb their ceiling-high stock of rare woods. The tones of the wood are the marqueterian's palette; the grains are as brushstrokes. Always wanting to widen his means of expression, Thayer insists that the countless thousands of board-feet here are never enough. "And when I think of all the wonderful wood that the furniture factories throw out," he laments, "it brings an aching to my heart."

Once the woods for each piece are selected and notes made as to how the grains shall run, "sandwiches" are made. The meat of each sandwich is the precious veneer, protected from splintering by the bread of lesser woods and garnished with the cutting guide

*(continued on back)*

of a paper pattern. Thayer takes these to the special German marquetry saw that was "made before I was," puts on his telescopic spectacles, and sets out to *split* each guideline with the string-thin blade. A stream of compressed air keeps the work-zone free of sawdust. Old-timers would be apalled at this, Thayer confides. "They were taught from childhood to cut with a rythmic pursing of the lips and a *pfffft-pfffft-pfffft*," he says by way of demonstration.



*Thayer at the saw, reaching for his telescopic glasses.*

A lifetime spent as a construction engineer has predisposed Thayer to the technical innovations that make pouncing and pfft-ing unnecessary. "Really," he offers, "the old-time marquetarians used what was available to them, so why shouldn't we today?"

Anna and Thayer assemble their pictures with a surgical scalpel. Once the pieces are gently impaled on the knifepoint it is easier to move them into place. "That wood is one twenty-eighth of an inch thick," Thayer states. "If you try to handle it with your fingers you'll crack it all up and be into trouble."

At one time the scalpel played a much more active role in this assembly process because "the beginner has to do an agonizing amount of trimming and fitting. We don't have to do that much any more," Thayer remarks, and *snaps* a piece into position as proof.

"Oh, that sound makes us happy here."

The assembled works must be pressed in a huge and venerable bookbinding press, sanded, finished and burnished until all the luster of the wood is brought out and preserved. Finally, they have but to wait for the growing numbers of people who appreciate them.

Twenty-five years ago, when the Francis' were starting out in marquetry, a woman in a Nashville gift shop told them that she didn't care to look at the Thayer Artcraft Marquetry because "most marquetry I've seen is so *poorly* done."

"Well," says Thayer, "that woman was unknowingly the greatest single source of inspiration we've had, because we vowed from that day that people should not think of our work that way."

Every working day here at Thayer Artcraft Marquetry, Thayer and Anna Francis spare no effort towards the vow they have made to themselves.



*Woodcarving,  
Shaving Horse,  
1975,  
length: 26",  
acrylic paint on basswood, pine, and oak.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$200)*

CHARLES EARNHARDT (1942- )/ WHITTLIN'/CARVED SCENES

## SHAVINGS



"What I'm working on a piece I like to just sit down with it and work on until I'm finished," Charles says of his intense workstyle.

"Right now I'm using basswood. I used to use pine all the time. The basswood is soft enough to work quickly, which is important to me. Now Ed, my neighbor—he has a piece of curly



maple he brought down here to saw and he's gonna be carving on that piece for a year. The knifemarks that I want to leave on my pieces because they're part of the piece, they have to be done fairly quickly, generally, just like . . . sketching."

"I don't like any of the commercial knives. Even the knives they sell for whittlin' have outrageous handles on 'em. Nobody could hold on to a knife like that for long. I make my own knives sometimes and they're pretty good, but I'm still searching for the ideal metal."

"I don't have any romantic involvement with the carving once it's done. It's the challenge of making it that satisfies me."



*"We're living high now. Mack has real dog food to eat!"*

Route 1, Box 51

Grassy Creek, North Carolina 28631

Burt Robbins was Charles Earnhardt's first booster.

"He was a friend of my Daddy's," Charles explains, "who worked at the water plant down on the river in Salisbury. A lot of times he didn't have anything to do, so he whittled. He was a railroad fan. He'd make a watch stand—like a lamp-post, hang a railroad watch up there, and then around the post he'd have some sort of characters standin' around; an engineer, an oiler and a fireman—those types of characters."

Well, really the most that Burt did was that he was, uh, a constant source of encouragement. He never had any training *himself* to pass on, so really it was kind of a social thing for both of us. Just . . . whittlin'."

"Before that I had done a little bit of whittling, you know, birds, small animals and things like that. I never gave it much serious consideration because I had always wanted to be a Rembrandt. But I was . . . not much, really. Not a Rembrandt, even. When I got with Burt I started doing small statuettes."

—When did it becomes something serious with you?

Cheryl Earnhardt laughs.

"I blame myself," she says. "Getting a wife to support."

Charles nods. "Well, that's when it really got down tough but I had decided that I wanted to move up to the mountains and I didn't want to farm so I just came up one summer and I was whittlin' then. I was alternating whittlin' and pickin' up pop bottles."

"We made more picking up pop bottles," Cheryl remembers. "I thought Charles was getting ripped off. Selling a piece for twenty dollars because he needs twenty dollars right then. So, I

*(continued on back)*

**CHARLES EARNHARDT (1942- ) / WHITTLIN'/CARVED SCENES**

began to nag him. We lived off three-hundred dollars that first year. You can do that but you don't have a lot of extras. I always felt that he was worth a whole lot more. If he had to spend a month carving a piece and then get twenty dollars out of it, then to get three hundred dollars a year he'd have to carve twelve months. If he could get more money for one piece then we could *play*, and walk through the woods sometimes.

"So, I was looking out for myself."

Charles speaks about his work.

"For a long time I've been interested in antiques, and restorations and reconstructions like Old Salem and Williamsburg and that kind of place. And I'm interested in mountain life anywhere up until, say the thirties. After that it gets to be a little bit . . . *late*, for my particular interests."

"I carve to please myself and that's what I prefer. Every once in a while I'll take a commission but I don't much like to do 'em," he laughs. "I'm supposed to be doing one now."

"If I'm doing what I want to do from the very beginning it always turns out better."

"I'll tell you what it really is," Cheryl offers. "He likes to look at these antique books and he sees something and thinks 'I could make that' and he does—he makes all these little *things*. About that time we're starving to death so he figures out some

kind of way to make it look together in a scene and put a person in there doing something.

"I don't know if you want to put that in the book but that's the truth. I don't think he's ever said 'I think I'll make a man sitting at a table eating his dinner or a man building a dulcimer.'"

We all laugh because, we remark, just as Charles' scenes fall together from scattered bits and pieces, so do our lives.



Woodcarving  
Early Feeder,  
1975,  
height: 10 1/2",  
yellow poplar.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$300)



CLARENCE DONALDSON (1928- ) / WOODCARVER



Clarence Donaldson seeks challenge. In his youth he built a Ford that no one—not even the sheriff—could ever catch. His current automotive project is a shade tamer: a wrecked pick-up which now sits in his backyard because “somebody said it was totalled and I think I can get it back on the road.”

The same spirit started Clarence carving. “I saw this little carved turtle in Cherokee in 1969,” Clarence recalls, “and I thought ‘now I can do better than that.’ So I set in on the ‘49’er”

Clarence had never done any carving at all before this piece, he reports, not even as a boy.

“Were you a little surprised when it came out as well as it did?” I asked him. He laughed and said “No, I kind of knew it was going to.”

*Woodcarving,  
Forty-Niner,  
1969,  
height: 6 1/2",  
black walnut,  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artist)*



Clarence Donaldson likes to carve figures which embody vanishing lifestyles. "How many kids today," he asks, "have really seen the sight of a man getting up before daylight to feed the stock?"

"I cut out (Clarence's term for carving) a blacksmith and he had an old foot-axe. 'Mercy sakes look at that mattock,' somebody said when he saw it. That wasn't no mattock at all, that was a foot-axe—but very few people have seen one.

"If I ever get enough wood I intend to cut out an old-timey sorghum mill—mill, mule and all. Stuff like that's just about gone except in pictures. Mercy sakes, time was we'd walk fifteen miles of a night just to scrape the pan after they finished a run."



*Clarence at his studio—the kitchen table.*  
316 Assembly Street  
Waynesville, North Carolina 28786

Clarence says he's sorry to see the old ways pass.

"If time were to ever get really rough going," Clarence prophecies, "right now there's very few families that could go back to the old way of kerosene lanterns and woodstoves. Very few that could make it. Yeah, I'm really sorry because back then a fella done his work and when he came home he was tired but he had a look on his face like, the hell with the rest of the world—I'm working, I'm doing my job—I don't want anybody to bother me. That's what I'm trying to put into these particular pieces here like "Early Feeder—" that they're not . . . *dumb* people. They're not ignorant. People outside the Appalachian region, they think of the Hillbillies like the McCoys and the Hatfields, y'know the old feuds goin' on. They think that's all there is down here. But time is gonna prove 'em wrong."

"Communication" is the word Clarence uses to describe the energy that flows between himself and the wood he carves. "It's not 'hello how are you' or stuff like that, it's just a, a *feeling* between you and the piece you're working on and when you have that it'll pretty well come out the way you want it. To me there's nothin' more beautiful than a piece of wood. The fact is that man just can't duplicate wood. Seems like a piece of wood appreciates you and you appreciate it."

He's proudest of a carving he gave to a stranger awhile back. Clarence was in the hospital at the time, laid up with a back injury. He came to hear of an old man there who was nearly wasting away. "It seemed like he just wasn't interested in life anymore," Clarence says, "so I made him a little carving. He really took a shine to that thing.

"Well, one day the nurse come in his room and says (Clarence affects a professional sweetness) 'Why, Mr. Smith, what a *cute* mule.' Well that man just sat up in bed like a bolt."

Clarence takes a full deep breath. His eyes blaze and his nostrils flare.

*(continued on back)*

**CLARENCE DONALDSON (1928- ) / WOODCARVER**

“ ‘That’s my *jackass*,’ the man told her, ‘and don’t you touch him!’ ”

*Woodcarving,  
Woodchopper,  
1975,  
height 13”,  
yellow popular,  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artist)*





*Weaving, tapestry, Covered Wagon Scene, circa 1928,  
15" x 37 1/2", natural dyed wool, warp unknown.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild)*



Clem Douglas. Shadrach Mace. Walter B. Stephens.  
Members who gave far more than mere "dues."  
These three artisans are remembered by the Southern  
Highland Handicrafts Guild.

Walter's work is still with us. With his grandson Thomas Case on the wheel, the Pisgah Forest Pottery he founded some fifty years ago still turns out Walter's distinctive porcelain cameo ware. Fourth-generation potter in the family, Thomas is the third generation with the Guild. Walter's mother, who

started the family business, passed away before the Guild was born.

Mace chairs, sadly, are no longer being made. But Shadrach made them well, and what work of his we have sits as tight and creaks as nice as the day he ran his calloused hand over the rounds and declared it finished. No one who ever met Shadrach could forget him. Certainly no one who ever watched him pull his draw-knife and quip with the crowds outside the replica log cabin at the Guild's Asheville craft fair. "He had the twinkling eyes of a devil," one friend remembers, "the kindest, happiest devil."

As for Clem—she started the Guild. Not by herself, of course, but as much as any one person she birthed it, slapped it on the bottom, and nursed it along into strength.

**CLEMENTINE DOUGLAS (1893-1967)/TEACHER/WEAVER**



In isolation, the people of the Southern Appalachians enjoyed a rich and vital culture. Because they had to make everything they needed, they learned to do it well. The forms that evolved *functioned*. The method was honest: find the best stuff you could, do the best you could with it.

When the mountains finally opened up, they were ripe for the "Fruits of the industrial flatland." Store-bought cloth, factory-made tools and mail-order mandolins made life easier, to be sure; but in the change, the culture and skills of a people were dying.

Oddly enough, it was a group of outsiders—mostly Northeastern churchwomen—who saw what was going on. Coming down into the mountains after the turn of the century to help the "disadvantaged," these women had the rare good taste and humility to perceive that the souls they hoped to save in fact had ways of their *own* worth saving.

Perhaps these women, already accustomed to the products of the industrialized north, were more attuned to the charms of coverlets and cabinets that now seemed commonplace to their owners. Perhaps *because* they were *women* and thus outside the economic mainstream they had a respect for the domestic nature of handcrafting. Mountain crafts may have seemed less than glamorous in that pre-ecology era of belching-stack worship, but they had a quiet wholeness that the "outlanders" responded to.

At any rate these craft revivalists saw a way for the skill-rich, money-poor mountain people to do a day's work that they could proudly claim—and get paid for it.

After all, the same roads that brought calico in could take homespun out.

The Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, then, consolidated the pioneering work of people like Clem Douglas, Wilmer Stone, Lucy Morgan, Evelyn Bishop, Helen Dingman, Olive Dame Campbell, Louise Pitman, Dr. Mary Sloop, and Allen Eaton. (Berea College, The Penland School of Crafts, the John C. Campbell Folk School, The Spinning Wheel, and Allanstand are a few of the institutions these slightly awesome figures graced!)

With the Christmas tinsel of 1929 still on the trees, the Guild started life thirty members and craft centers strong.

#### Clementine Douglas

In the summer of 1919 a small young woman boarded the Memphis Special in New York City. She was bound for Smith, Kentucky, inspired to work at the mission school there by a rousing speech Helen H. Dingman of the Presbyterian Home Missions Board had given the year before.

No one on the platform that day—not even Clem Douglas herself—could know that just ten years later the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild would be having its charter meeting in Clem's Asheville weaving studio, "The Spinning Wheel."

But from the first step of the mule ride from Hagan to the mission school, Clem showed what it took to get by in her new world.

Spunk.

(text continued below)

*(text begins above)*

In three summers, she managed to get all the children crayons and scissors—things they had never seen before. With the older boys in the community—who had a fondness for drunken hell-raising—she established such a rapport that she was able to stage a Fourth of July celebration complete with the settlement's first fireworks display and ice cream picnic. No one misbehaved.

Though she came to help the children, the mountain women



*Clem in the doorway of the Spinning Wheel. (Original Doris Ulmann photograph loaned by Clementine Gregory).*

grew more and more special to Clem. She was enthralled by the intricate old woven coverlets that they used so casually. They in turn were flattered by her interest in these things they took for granted.

Clem found old weaving in horse-blankets, hen-house windows, trash piles. Once, finding a pleasing plaid in a scrap-heap, she was sent by its owner to a cove where “the quare folks all wear checks, and the checks run in families. Sure enough” Clem wrote, “here were clan tartans, handed down through the years, quite true to their Scotch antecedents.”

With Clem's prompting, soon the Smith women were dusting off their old looms and wheels and studying their yellowed pattern drafts.

Leaving Smith, Clem took a “rather grand” designing job with the Tenafly Weaving Company of New Jersey. It was “too impersonal” after the warmth of Smith, and Clem soon returned to the mountains—this time to Saluda, North Carolina, where her friend Wilmer Stone had started a weaving studio with the local people. *That* was more like it.

In fact, Clem just had to have a studio of her own.

In May of 1924, near Asheville, Clem found the spot.

At first there was just her house, with a wing for the looms. Then one day, at the top of a rugged trail her Model T could barely crest, Clem found just what she wanted: an old log cabin. She poked around for hours, returning with a flint-lock musket; a coon-skin; an oak settee; a dulcimer; and the breathless exclamation that “I've simply made a haul! I've never been so excited in my life!”

The cabin's old log were numbered, snaked down the trail and reassembled on Clem's land.

“The Spinning Wheel” was born, into great success.

People loved the cabin's old furniture and tools, the hanks of vegetable-dyed yarn here and there, and of course the beautiful

*(continued on back)*

# CLEMENTINE DOUGLAS (1893-1967)/TEACHER/WEAVER

things Clem and her young weavers designed and made.

They were a lucky lot, the Spinning Wheel weavers. In Clem they found a brilliant teacher and a staunch friend. Clem understood that the greatest part of teaching was instilling the passion for learning—and she did it by example.

Always urging her weavers to share what they knew with her, she learned their songs and games and stories. "Visitors used to like hearing the girls sing the old ballads as they tromped the treadles," Clem said. "Visitors" included Burl Ives and John Jacob Niles.

In turn, Clem tied her weaving lessons into a larger perspective. She spoke of the history behind the different patterns, no doubt remembering the time back in Smith when a woman had remarked "Bonaparte's Defeat?—hit don't mean narry a thing, hit's just how you call it." The fibers themselves led to discussion of the ancient civilizations that had first learned to use them. Whenever Clem returned from her frequent trips abroad, she would have new weaving samples and stories to pinpoint on the Spinning Wheel map.

"Seems to me," one of her weavers observed, "if you was to learn all there is to know about weaving, you'd pretty nigh know all there is to know."

Meanwhile, craft centers were springing up all through the Southern Highlands. As the dedicated women who spearheaded this craft revival came to know one another, all saw the need for an organization that would coordinate and further the movement.

Out of that need came the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild. The charter meeting was held in Clem's shop, and from the beginning until her tragic death in an automobile accident almost forty years later, Clem was a vital force in shaping the Guild's growth.

With the Guild established the pace of the crafts movement accelerated. Clem worked tirelessly; at the Spinning Wheel; setting up exhibits, fairs and educational programs with the

Guild; managing *The Southern Highlanders*—a TVA-sponsored craft marketing cooperative (which later merged with the Guild), even going to Washington to keep the fledgling craft industry from being strangled by wage and hour legislation that would have priced its products off the growing market.

This was not Clem's last contact with the government. So well respected a mover and shaker was she that the State Department sent her on assignment to establish craft industries in Haiti and later Hawaii. More foreign assignments were offered Clem, but she turned them down.

Even at the zenith of her power and prestige, Clem remained utterly down to earth. In Haiti she learned Creole so that she could speak directly with the women she was trying to help—much to the horror of her very proper French-speaking associates. Everywhere, in every situation, Clem's respect for the people she hoped to help was manifest.

Clem's achievements and involvements, her friendships in the crafts community, were almost innumerable. They not only could fill a book, they do\*—"A Weavin' Woman" by Clem's good friend Bernice A. Stevens. Those who wish to know more about Clem, about the history of crafts in the Appalachians—or who simply want to be inspired—are urged to read it.

What is important to note about Clem Douglas here is that all of her many undertakings were carried on in a spirit of reverence. Clem made each person to whom she gave feel that they were giving her something too.

Clem Douglas held the world—and its every inhabitant—in awe.

\*The author thanks Mrs. Stevens for her permission to use the book as a source in preparing this article. "A Weavin' Woman" is published by the Buckhorn Press, Box 407, Gatlinburg Tennessee, and is also available through the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, 100 Reddick Road, P.O. Box 9145, Asheville, North Carolina 28805.



*Blown glass,  
iridescent vases,  
1975  
tall—height: 5 1/2", round—height: 3",  
fumed lead-base opaque glass with silver-base decoration.  
(Opening Bid Price—Tall, \$150; Short, \$100)*



DALE BROWNSCOMBE (1945- ) / GLASSBLOWER



"Glass has so much magic," claims glassblower Dale Brownscombe. "You consider it magic to the point where you start a methodology, a way of putting things together—how you put your pipe up; how you clean it off; how you set your tools up on the bench. You have to think that *that's* gonna make the piece, because you don't really know. We're so involved in technology, most of us, but we melt a pot of glass and we don't know if it's gonna work. Tomorrow it works, today it doesn't. It has to do with the incantation that you say."

"Glass up until modern times was always related to religion. In Egypt, the priests made the glass, because only they had the magic. The poor sonuvabitch that tried to blow in his own studio couldn't do it—well, he could, but he eventually became Pharaoh, or something."

As he focuses on his work, Dale becomes silent.

He wraps a molten filament of silver-base glass around the embryonic form of a piece. One hand steadily rotates the piece; the other guides the thread of glass so that a fine, unbroken spiral enwraps the turning globe.

Wielding a pointed tool, Dale works these still-plastic threads



Penland, North Carolina 28765

into what become iridescent chevron patterns on finished pieces like the two photographed.

"All these techniques should be automatic," Dale remarks. "Where I like to *think* is in decoration. Where you put the little twists and pulls is very important."

"Now I'm thinking of the shape of it," Dale says, using centrifugal force to elongate the piece as it swings at the end of his blowpipe. "If I had to think about *how* to do it I couldn't be as concerned right now with *what* the shape will be."

Dale works the piece to completion and takes a break.

As hard as he works to realize his vision in glass, not much of what Dale makes completely pleases him. Every now and again, though, a pieces does seem "right."

That must feel good, I offer.

"Well, it's a funny thing," Dale responds, "because those are the times when something takes over and you can do no wrong. It's hard to put your finger on it but there's a point where magic takes over technique."

At what point does the artist become available to this magic? "Did you like anything you blew your first day?" I ask Dale.

"Naw," he smiles, "not the first two years, really."

"I don't know whether I get anything now . . . But then you get to those few good pieces that we talked about—there're a couple of 'em in the next room. I can't let anybody else have them, because I'm in love with them. Really, there have been a lot of pieces I've sold that I wish I still had."

"—Work of this kind is so incredible," I remark, "because you really want people to have it and yet you make it because *you* like it and want it. You'd really like to be able to clone everything that you make—you know, put it in an atomic regenerator and have another copy."

Dale is amused at the thought. "I'd rather have each piece reflect more of what's happening . . . my involvement with the

*(continued on back)*

**DALE BROWNSCOMBE (1945- )/GLASSBLOWER**

glass. That's one reason I don't like some people's work, because a lot of people are not that involved anymore. They've mastered the technique, they've found something that's beautiful and they keep making that same piece and pretty soon you don't see their souls in it anymore. Whereas I try to really be involved in what I'm doing."

*Involvement.* This is the crux of the matter for Dale; and the quality which unites magic and technique toward a tangible end.

"My involvement now is in the design, in the shape and decoration. In the beginning it was in just *making* these funky little pieces with the lips off-center. They wouldn't have worked if I hadn't been as involved in them. Then, that was the best I could do and I had to use all my mental strength to hold the piece together and get through the technique of how to make it. I'm finding now that fortunately less and less of my energy goes to that and more and more goes into the form.

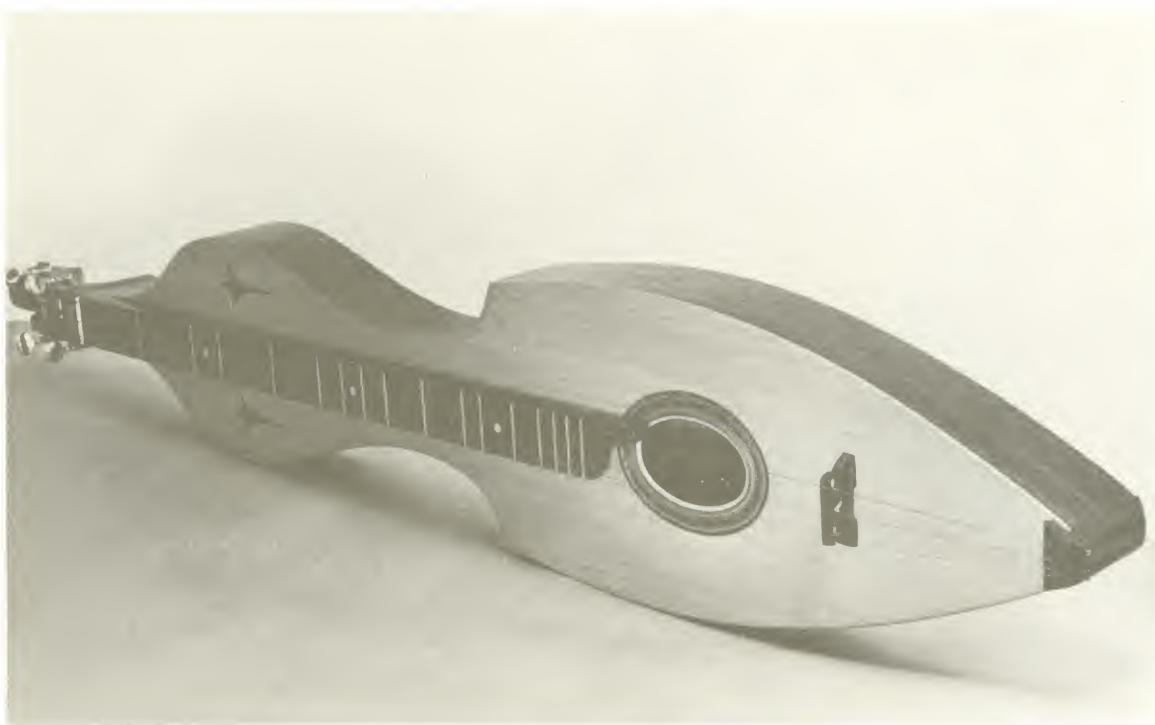
"I want something more elegant now.

"At some point in the process you become very unaccepting of those things that had a charm when you first started out because you couldn't do any better. You know, they had your soul in them. And then your soul seems to evolve into something more pristine.

"Even the funky people, their souls have evolved into something more and more pristine. Look at Fritz Dreisbach. I could never do his pieces but I really enjoy them. They've evolved from the time when he couldn't handle the glass. Now, he can make it do what he wants it to, put wings on it . . . and the wings look like it's flying. Before they looked like blobs of glass on the side of it.

"But they were fun too, because they had his soul in it.

"That seems to be the key," Dale observes, "for anybody, whatever you do.



*Dulcimer,  
Joyful Noise Dulcimer,  
1976,*

**DAVE MURRAY (1948- )/DULCIMER-MAKER**

Dave Murray lets the last notes resound and fade, then holds aloft the dulcimer he has built with his own hands and studies it.

"Now some people might complain that this dulcimer isn't the traditional instrument, and it's true that there are differences. For instance, on most dulcimers the fingerboard runs clear from one end to the other, where on this one it stops at the sound-hole, as you can see. Now I'm not knocking the people who build traditional dulcimers. Their work is every bit as valid, maybe more valid than mine."

"But the way I see it," he says quietly, "I'm as traditional as anyone, because I'm people, just like anyone. I'm a person involved in the process (he emphasizes the word) of building instruments."

Dave puts down the dulcimer and, with the same love, picks up a copy of "Sloane's Classical Guitar Construction".

"I get a lot of my direction from this book," says Dave, "and what Sloane says about the development of the early luthiers and their work on the guitar.

"Those people weren't tied down to reproducing instruments as they existed at that time. When they set out to build an instrument they tried to explore the possibilities of that instrument—how to get the best sound out of an acoustical instrument. They experimented with different wood and thicknesses of wood, different string patterns, different body shapes and bracing patterns. By spending their lives at it, they developed the instruments to their maximum potential."

"That's what I'm trying to do with the dulcimer. I don't think that because some early pioneer was limited to certain materials or construction techniques, I should be."

The early settlers, Dave explained, wanted an instrument that was simple and inexpensive to construct. They had neither the time and sophistication to build an instrument such as the guitar,

nor the money to buy one. Enter the dulcimer.

"The dulcimer is a *simple* stringed instrument," asserts Dave, "as simple a stringed instrument as you can make. It doesn't need a lot of complicated bracing because the fingerboard braces the front. So I see it as a kind of a basic instrument, like the invention of the wheel. But I don't think it needs to stop there."

"Tradition" is an elusive prey.

Some see physical objects as the embodiment of tradition and forge their own link by attempting to recreate old objects as closely as possible. Dave Murray is most concerned with the *creed* which guided the creators of yesterday's instruments: do the best you can with what is known and what is available.

So his shop, full of the very best tools he can afford, is no more quaint than an eighteenth-century Spanish luthier's shop would have seemed to a customer of that era. It is a workplace, a sawdust frontier.

"It's been fruitful," Dave smiles. "According to performers, there's a dramatic difference. Traditional dulcimers are so quiet that they make a lousy public instrument. There's a weakness . . . ."

His statement trails off in modesty, but his earlier playing has shown what he will not say himself—Dave Murray's "Joyful Noise" brand dulcimers have an unusually rich, full tone.

These days Dave could get twice as much for his dulcimers as the price he asks. One buyer who represents an exclusive firm offered Dave just those terms for every piece he could turn out. Dave turned him down.

"Not everyone has a shop," Dave says, "and when they want a dulcimer I don't think money should deny them."

"So long as I concentrate on what I'm doing instead of the end result I really enjoy it," he says. "If I worry about what I'm gonna gain from it, it ends up being a job like any other one."



*"The way I see it, I'm as traditional as anyone, because I'm people, just like anyone."*

**Barnardsville, N.C. 28709**

**DAVE MURRAY (1948- )/DULCIMER-MAKER**



*Book.*

*ARTISANS/APPALACHIA/USA,  
1977,  
6 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 8 $\frac{1}{8}$ ",*

*Gainsborough Confetti, 70# Softwhite Mohawk Superfine Text, M&M #721*

*(continued on back)*

**DAVID GAYNES (1950- )/WRITER-PHOTOGRAPHER**



*The infamous "Photo Van" in a typical mood.*

Living with David Gaynes as this work of his was brought into being, I have observed an amazing process. I have watched as an idea proposed by the Appalachian Consortium took root and then grew from a modest catalogue into a work of much greater



307 S. Richland Street  
Waynesville, N.C. 28786  
or c/o The Appalachian Consortium Press

*Photo by Alden Hanson*

scope. David has crafted, like any of the craftspeople he talked to and photographed, a work of artistic proportions. To have seen the almost religious fervor and intensity with which David threw himself into his labor has been an opportunity to see how a conception in the ideal plane can be transformed materially into the "real world". David's ideal propelled him without thought of remuneration, sleep, time, or any limitations at all. Not even a failing VW bus, bald tires, or broken plumbing were allowed to get in the way for long.

I recall David's feeling as he pondered a problem of lighting. "Maybe I'm trying to do things that are impossible and I just don't know it." Later that night I heard from my bed a shattering cacophony of breaking glass. I rushed out to see what had happened. There was an expensive glass vase sitting in the shards of a supporting glass plate, and there was David sitting dazedly in the corner with a mysterious and perplexing smile on his face. "I've come to a realization," he said. "Tomorrow I've got to slow down and get some things straight. This is driving me crazy."

Of course these doubts and fears were overcome with the same force of the "rightness" of the endeavor which propelled the project from the beginning; and the rest, as is said, is history. David got a contract, more time, the support he needed to regain his confidence, and now these pages are a reality.

David and I talked about his experiences during the project and how it came about.

"Well, I came down to the mountains as a visitor after going to Wayne State University in my hometown of Detroit. Before I came, I was working as a photographer and writer for the Model Cities Program there. A friend of mine was planning a book about Yancey County, North Carolina, and he asked me about doing the photographs. I went back to Detroit to assemble money and equipment, returned to this area and set up a

*(continued on back)*

**DAVID GAYNES (1950- )/WRITER-PHOTOGRAPHER**

darkroom. The book project fell through so I wound up doing railroad work, stone-masonry, farm labor and all kinds of jobs. I even cooked in a day-care center. I got interested again in photo-journalism and worked as a freelancer for the *Johnson City Press-Chronicle* until this crafts project came up."

—What were some of the things that struck you about the work you have done on this project and the people you have met?

"I feel fortunate that instead of just being seen as a 'reporter,'

people trusted me and allowed me not to be a stranger. I felt honored that I was able to be a collaborator in a certain outlook and energy, basically that of "joy," and the sharing of this spirit with other people. These craftspeople have increased the quality of their lives by seeking the best in themselves and manifesting this spirit in the physical world. Collaborating with the artists depicted here has been the high point of my experience."

—What was the low point?

"Reading a cheap novel about boxing in a strange hotel in Virginia."

Phil Edgerton



*Metalwork,  
Landscape Pillow,  
1975,  
9 1/2" x 12 1/2",  
repoussé copper with etching stitched to quilted velvet.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artist)*

**DEBRA LYNN GOLD (1951- )/METALSMITH/TEACHER**



*Metalwork,  
Double Bottle Form,  
1973,  
height: 4 3/4",  
raised sterling silver.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$1,000)*

Somewhere between the world events and the fillers, the May 27th *Johnson City Press Chronicle* carried an arresting article.

"An East Tennessee State University art instructor," the story read, "has given a new kind of final exam.

"She staged a drag race."



1315 Seminole Drive  
Johnson City, Tennessee 37601

It seems one Debra Gold, teacher of "Three-Dimensional Design, Art 1130" required her 22 students to design and build a three-dimensional vehicle. Any configuration was acceptable—as long as it did not have the traditional four wheels.

Five groups formed among the students. When the banging stopped and the dust settled, a seven-wheeled raven; a chicken egg (with chicken-suited driver); a rock; a coffin; and a three-wheeled airplane made from an inverted car hood, wheeled out into the sun.

Separated by the flower-bed median, the gravity-powered machines raced down the twin inclined walkways between ETSU's Gilbreath and Dossett Halls. Eliminations were staged by racing two vehicles at a time.

In the final heat between the coffin and the rock—the rock met sudden death.

Debra sits in her little back office and her laugh rises over the din of her metalworking students outside the door. . .

"The coffin was just beautiful," she says. "All black, and the student driving it wore a black tuxedo. His face was white with blue lips, and a friend of his who's a theater major dressed up as an undertaker and said prayers over the coffin before each race."

Only someone with ample imagination herself could inspire such outbursts of it among her students.

Works like "Double Bottle Form" and "Landscape Pillow" identify Debra as such a person.

Of the latter, a velvet and copper construction, Debra asserts that "it seemed perfectly logical to combine metal with a soft material like velvet.

"Everyone thinks of metal as such a hard unyielding material, but it's not that way for me. It's really very plastic. I can move it around any way I want."

Debra's "inexplicable love for metal" started in a small  
(continued on back)

**DEBRA LYNN GOLD (1951- )/METALSMITH/TEACHER**

Mexican town. South for summer study, she found her hoped-for ceramics class closed and transferred to a metalworking class taught by the village tinsmith. By the end of the first class she had “a pair of godawful-looking earrings” and a life-direction.

Earrings long since eclipsed by grander efforts, Debra still feels the passion that overtook her below the border.

“There’s an awful lot of me in my pieces,” she says.

“I’m very involved with forming the metal, with metalsmithing as opposed to just casting, working in wax, or cutting out sheets and soldering them together. I combine techniques, but ultimately it’s just picking up a hammer and *feeling* my energy making a mark on that metal.”

Debra stops, then laughs at herself.

“This is getting very emotional.”



Woodcarving,  
*Saint Francis*,  
1970,  
height: 8 1/2",  
buckeye.

(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the John C. Campbell Folk School)

DEXTER DOCKERY (1931- ) / WOODCARVER





Brasstown, North Carolina 28902

Like the other carvers in the Brasstown area, Dexter Dockery received early instruction from Muriel Martin. He has since left the Brasstown Carvers "with no hard feelings" because his overriding desire is to carve what, when and how *exactly* as he pleases. "I've got nothing but good feelings about those people," Dexter says, "but I like to work on my own."

"I like to draw up my own pattern and carve from that. Draw it up, saw the wood, and see if it don't look like what I had in my mind."

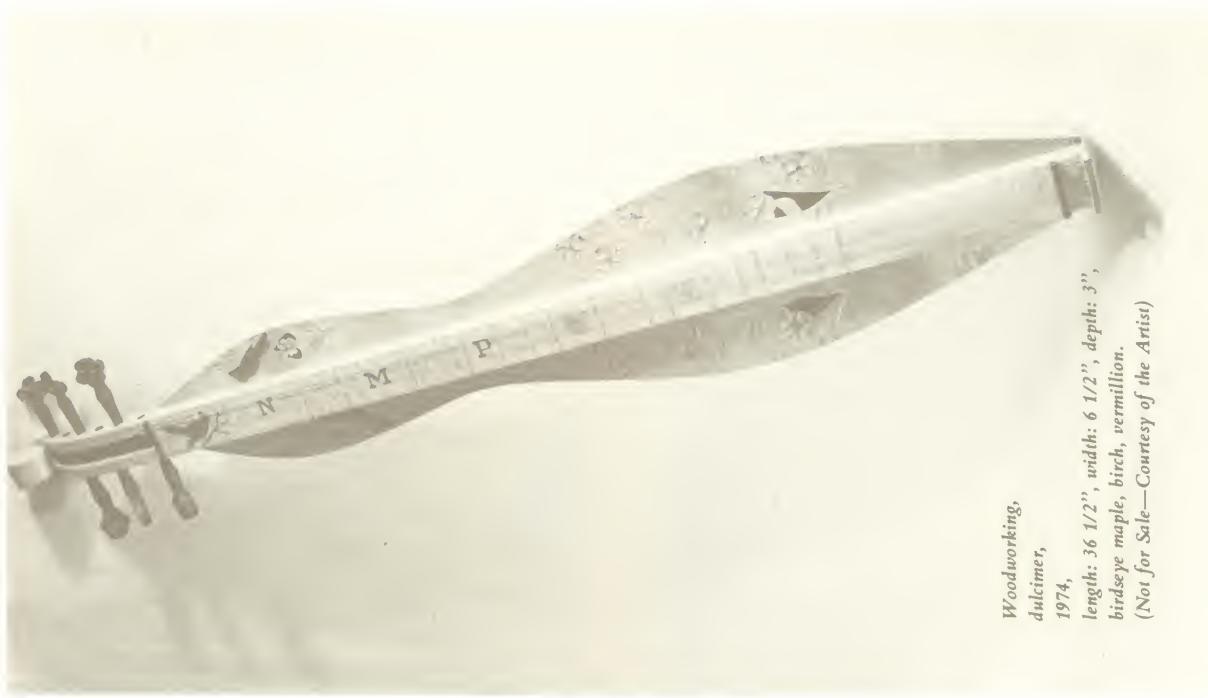
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**DEXTER DOCKERY (1931- ) /WOODCARVER**

*Goat, 1970, length: 6", buckeye. (Not for Sale—Courtesy of the John C. Campbell Folk School)*



*Saint Francis, 1970, height: 20", walnut. (Not Exhibited—Not for Sale—Courtesy of the John C. Campbell Folk School)*



Woodworking,  
dulcimer,  
1944,  
length: 36 1/2", width: 6 1/2", depth: 3",  
birdseye maple, birch, vermillion.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artist)

EDD PRESNELL (1916- )/WOODWORKER/DULCIMERS



*Edd's workshop. Just-steamed dulcimer sides rest clamped in their forms.*

I went to visit Edd Presnell in a blizzard. "You'll find him hard to get to today," his neighbor warned me as I asked for directions.



*"Me, I work because I like to work."*

Box 235

Banner Elk, North Carolina 28604

Actually, he wasn't hard to get to at all. His house is at the bottom of a steep and winding road. The only hard part on such an icy day was getting my bus *stopped* at the bottom before I rocketed clear through his backyard and on down the mountain to oblivion.

By the time I collected myself, a friendly pack of dogs had gathered outside my bus. They led me to Edd's shop and announced me.

"You sure have enough dogs," I said to Ed. He'd just settled back in his chair and was carving out the heart-shaped soundhole of a dulcimer with his pocket-knife. "Do you ever feel like you're working for those dogs?"

The knife slowed and stopped.

"I'll tell you what," he said. "Lot of people these days don't know what they're working for."

"We've been through every age — The Stone Age. The Iron Age. The Machine Age. The Atomic Age, and now the Space Age and the Atomic Age put together, only to find ourselves smack in the Money Age. The Money Age. It's got to where a feller won't speak no more than twelve words to you unless there's money in it."

Edd returned to the knife. Each stroke scraped the soundboard into life.

"Me, I work because I like to work." Edd declared.

Edd has been making dulcimers for forty-one years. He's turned out over eleven-hundred since the mid-fifties, when he started counting. It hasn't interfered with his conversation. Carving on the front of one dulcimer while steaming the sides of two more, Edd held forth on everything from politics to the weather. Discussing the latter, his face clouded over and he wagged a finger at me.

Tire chains ought to be mandatory equipment in every car, he insisted.

I thought of my bald-tired, chain-less bus in Edd's frozen

*(continued on back)*

**EDD PRESNELL (1916- )/WOODWORKER/DULCIMERS**

yard, and winced. Leaving-time confirmed my fears—that bus just skated. I tried every trick I could think of: rocking it, gunning it, coaxing it over the frozen ridges. All I got for my pains was a lot of noise and a panoramic view of Edd's environment sliding slowly sideways past my windshield. Worse, the yard looked like trench warfare.

Ed worked through the din.

I shuffled back to the light. If ever there was a time when one man could gloat at another, it was my shamed return to Edd's door.

Edd just laid down his tools and strolled out like a man walking to his favorite roses. "Looks like you're *stuck*," he said without annoyance. He soon returned with a box of sawdust and made a road up to level ground. Let me help, I said, putting my mouth where my back should have been. Edd toiled on heedless, silent, bare-handed and wet-kneed. At last he stepped aside, satisfied.

"Try it now," he said.

At the high end of the sawdust trail. I threw the bus into neutral and tried to thank Edd for his help. He waved it away and almost smiled.

My answering smile faded as I drove off. Ahead a sheet of ice stretched gleaming up to the moon. The bus yelled at the roadside trees but moved through them like a slug. We could not generate enough go to crest that hill. We tried again and again, moving further back each time in a futile quest for inertia.

On successive passes the branch-hung right-hand ditch claimed the antenna, the rear-view mirror, and finally my composure. It was back to Edd's.

He greeted me like a welcome guest. No, there was no wrecker, no nearby neighbor's tractor. Only Edd out kicking in the driveway snow until one brown loop and another showed in the white. Steady pulling freed a tire chain, rigid with ice. Three more chains lay buried beneath the broken crust. Edd carried them all in a great clanking bundle to the porch and laid them out. Gloveless, he grappled with the chains until they unraveled.

He walked the long walk to the bus and then lay under, struggling to hook up the chains this hapless flatlander knew nothing about. No grunt could mate the hook with its partner link. Back in the shop Edd twisted and hammered out the kinks, holding the chains aloft at last like prize-winning fish.

But that wasn't enough either.

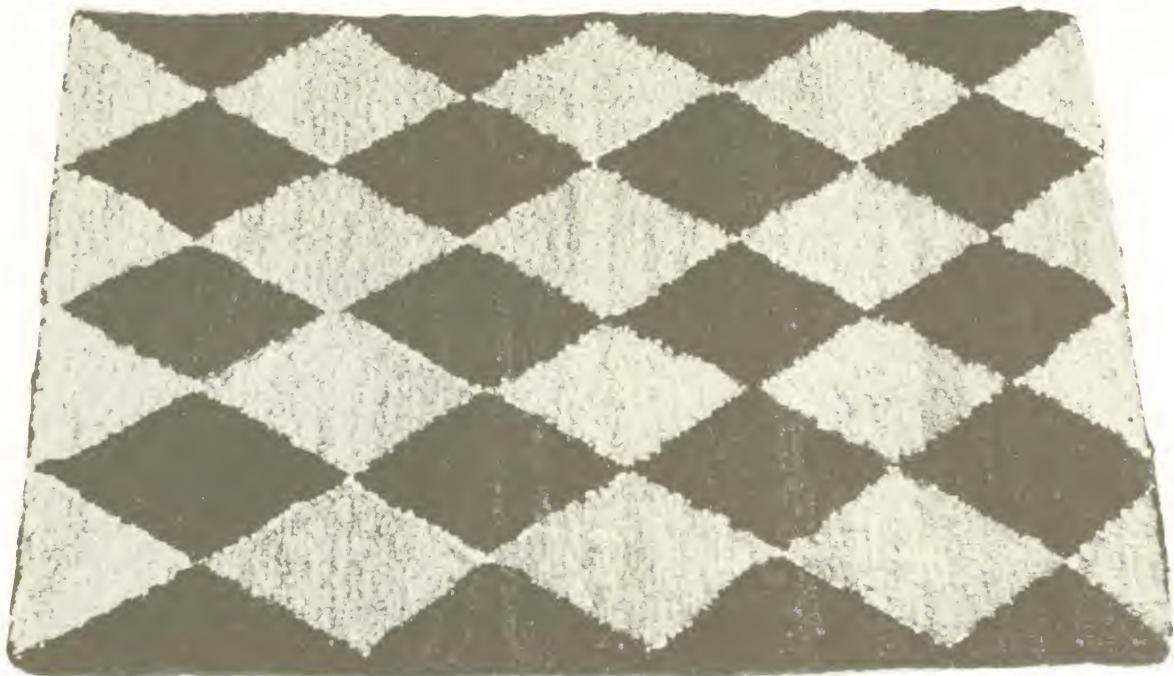
"Them tires of yours are bigger than I thought," Ed remarked as we returned to the porch and fetched the longer set. He straightened these too, and through all of this I dogged him, trying every way to feel bad and let him know it.

"I'm sorry. I feel awful. You must have work to do. I should have known. It's my fault."

This man who had brought forth sweet tone from a forest of trees was suddenly deaf to me. He just worked on until, on the third try, the longer set of chains was hooked up snug and the surplus links neatly safety-wired.

I launched into a parting oration but Edd's steady gaze stilled my tongue.

"Don't talk about trouble," he said, brushing the snow from his beard. "I've knowed trouble all my life. A little more don't make no difference. You just needed some help, that's all."



*Hooked rugs,  
1976,  
32" x 22",  
undyed natural wool with burlap backing.  
(Opening Bid Price-\$125)*

ELSIE TRIVETTE (1911- )/WOOLWORKER

# SHAVINGS



It seems that most of us are drawn to things which lie outside of our common experience.

"I was about fifteen when I had my first car-ride," Elsie Trivette remembers. "I was really excited. My cousin picked me up and took me to the post-office. It went about ten-mile-an-hour but I thought it was makin' 'bout a hundred. The fence-posts would just fly by."

Elsie's seven-year-old granddaughter Brenda finds nothing remarkable about motoring. The wheel *she* hopes to get her hands on is old and made of wood.

"Grandma says when she gets done with her spinning wheel she's gonna give it to me," Brenda reports with a proud smile. "She's gonna give me an' my cousin her long dresses and stuff. Grandma's teaching me how to spin. It's *fu-u-un!*"

When Elsie Trivette was a girl the spinning wheel and carding comb were tools of daily life. They still are for Elsie, but for most of us they are a mystery and a treat to watch in operation.

Elsie makes her living working wool, as her mother did. Today though, *process* more than function defines her products. Fairgoers who flock to watch Elsie work buy her work, one suspects, more because it sings of human effort in a mechanized world than simply because it can cover a patch of floor.

“You can take a handmade rug and a machine-made rug and I say people’ll go for that handmade rug more,” Elsie observes.



*“I just enjoy going to fairs and showing people what I do. I like to see that young people are interested in taking it up.”*

*“This old wheel has seen me through many a mile that I’d never have got to gone if it weren’t for it.”*

Sugar Grove, North Carolina 28679

“This is the natural color of the sheep and this is too,” says Elsie, pointing to the cream and charcoal-brown diamonds of wool in the rug she shares with us here. “They call ‘em black sheep but you can’t get none that’s really black.”

“I got the wool of a neighbor. I had to wash it and dry it, and then I had to put kerosene on it to keep the lanolin in it. Then I carded it into rolls just like I use for spinning, and then I hooked it through burlap. It took me thirty-eight-and-a-half hours to make this rug.”

“My mother made rugs like this. She’d make different designs, she’d vegetable-dye some, sometimes she used ‘em on the floor and sometimes we’d sell ‘em. It was mostly for the family at first—back then people didn’t have no place to sell rugs. Then after several years she got to where she could sell ‘em.”

“When a sheep was killed they’d shear off the wool as clos’t as they could and then use the skin for a rug by the fireplace. I’ve laid many of a time on rugs such as that.”

“I started into rugmaking when I was about ten. My mother needed help trying to make a living. She’d take and mail the rugs off to people and they’d send us used clothing, for rugs and for quilt scraps. Back then you couldn’t get materials like you do now.”

“Things started changing *a lot* back when I was twenty or younger. Because when I was young my mother made *all* my clothes. She knit all my stockings, my caps, my sweaters—she’d weave all of the bedclothes and blankets I had. I didn’t know what it was to go to the store and buy a new dress.”

“Sometimes she’d get material for 5c a yard. I liked what they called a voile, organdy. A dotted Swiss. That was my Sunday dress.”

“And then for my school dresses she would get overhaul (sic) material and this khaki material and make me one out of each.”

*(continued on back)*

**ELsie Trivette (1911- )/WOOLWORKER**

She'd ravel the thread out of the brown dress and embroider the neck of the blue dress, and the other way around. She'd just make a briar-stitch and little flowers."

"I'm glad for the convenience of being able to buy clothes, but if I had to I'd rather go back to the old time ways. I really had . . . . people was more happier. And they was contented at home, they wasn't going out in cars and that, they was at home all the time. They didn't have much but what they had they enjoyed.

"And that means more than anything, to enjoy."



*Basketweaving,  
rivercane shopping basket  
with "Noonday Sun" and  
"Cross on the Hill" traditional motifs,  
1976,  
height: 13 1/4" with handles,  
rivercane; bloodroot and butternut natural dyes.  
(Qualla Arts & Crafts: Opening Bid Price—\$60)*

**EMMA TAYLOR (1920- )/BASKETWEAVER**

*Basketweaving,  
wallhanging, "Cross on the Hill",  
"Noonday Sun" and "Hearts" motif.  
1975,  
38" x 24",  
rivercane; butternut and bloodroot natural dyes,  
(Not Exhibited—Qualla Arts & Crafts)*

Emma Taylor weaves a wall-hanging on her kitchen table. The sound of a stream enters the small room through an open window. Emma's fingers mingle with the dyed reeds, and peace abides in her space.

Some basketweavers specialize, but Emma works with all three common Cherokee materials: white oak, rivercane, and honeysuckle. These she gathers herself, waiting until autumn to get the honeysuckle because "the snakes are too bad in the summer." She fells the oak with an axe, and says that she's grown so used to it that "I don't even think nothing about it anymore."

"The men'll go out and get the timber sometimes," Emma concedes, "but every now and then they won't get the right kind. The person that makes the basket, she knows what kind to get."

Bloodroot, butternut and black walnut are the dyes Emma uses, weaving the results of their solution into both traditional and original designs. Taught how to work cane and honeysuckle in school, Emma learned to weave the white oak from her mother.

"Back then, they didn't have no craft shops like they have



today," Emma remembers. "My mother had to go to the people's houses in the country and sell her baskets there. I don't remember anything back then but market baskets—big baskets with the handles on them. She'd take and trade them for potatoes

*(continued on back)*



Route 1  
Bryson City, North Carolina 28713

**EMMA TAYLOR (1920- )/BASKETWEAVER**

and . . . all kinds of stuff. That's the way they got their food back then. By the time I started out there was shops to sell 'em in."

"Well, I've raised all eight kids this way," the widowed basket-maker says of her craft. "Every one of 'em. Raised 'em on beans and potatoes," she laughs.

"Once you learn how to make baskets I reckon that's your hobby. Well, I've worked in factories too but not too long. That's not too much fun. I like to stay home. I've been raised I reckon like that. And from the time I got married, since I knew I had a home of my own, well there wasn't no use to go out and see other places because I was raising a family. My kids, they've been around, been to college. That's what I miss. I would've liked to finish school. Sometimes I think about it. It'd be easier for me to understand now. Because, when I went to school I wasn't speaking English and it was hard for me to understand what was going on in class. It was hard for me, because I was used to my own language.

"I still remember those big old charts they put me on, with the ABC's. I reckon that's where I caught on. But, today, none of my kids don't talk our language. If I was to stand right here and preach to them in my own language they'd never know what I said."

"Well, you could get mad and cuss at 'em without doin' too much harm, couldn't you?" my friend asks Emma.

"We don't have no cuss words in our language," she answers gently.

We watch Emma weave for hours, staying long after all that can be spoken about the process is said.

Between easy silences, Emma recalls the past days of her people. Before the reservations and the white man's food, she says, Indians used to be tall, handsome, healthy people. "You can see it in the real old pictures."

"We used to have plenty cane right by the river," Emma remarks at another moment, "but they've been building so many roads by the river they've just destroyed our river. We have to go clear to Tennessee to get our cane."

"My mother told me *way* back the Indians talked about the settlers who come around 'buying dirt.' That's how they called people who bought land. They were just buying dirt, the Indians thought—they figured they were getting a good deal.

"But they came to the place where they'd sold so much dirt they didn't have but a tiny spot left for themselves."

Beneath the backdrop of a bumper sticker on the doorway behind her which reads "Custer Had It Coming" Emma offers her words softly and without rancor.

People from New York are paying big money for baskets these days, Emma reports. This is a positive trend. Even with inflation, the exchange rate is probably better than it was in the potatoes-for-baskets era.

Too, it is heartening that people are moved enough by the useful beauty of Emma Taylor's baskets to pay well for them.

Yet it is hard not to wonder how the buyers, shopping in airconditioned craft-shop comfort, can realize who makes these baskets—a strong and gentle woman who chops down oak trees, feeds eight children with her hands, and finds herself living on "a tiny spot of dirt" in a once-fenceless continent.



*Weaving  
Whig Rose handwoven  
bedspread with hand-tied fringe  
1976  
88" x 104"  
mercerized warp and synthetic blend yarn  
(opening bid price—\$140)*

ESTELLA C. BARNES (1898- )/WEAVER



The Whig Rose pattern, Mrs. Barnes shares with us here has served her well. In 1974 Estella won a best-in-show plaque and a thousand-dollar award for an off-white Whig Rose bedspread.

"But I'm not proud of myself," she says, "I'm proud because the Lord gave me the talent to do this with. If it wasn't for His help I couldn't do what I do—none of us could. If we trust our lives to Him we're gonna get along a heap better."

(text begins on back)



Route 2, Box 54  
Boone, North Carolina 28607

ESTELLA C. BARNES (1898- )/WEAVER

"Oh, I've been weaving about thirty-five years, I imagine. I took a course in weaving up here at the Watauga Handicraft Shop. Miz Lord was a special friend and she kept on urging me to come learn to weave, so finally I decided I'd go. And I took my course and enjoyed it 's'much it's become a pretty good-sized business now."

"I do a whole lot of canning and freezing and I also sell Avon, and weave, of course—I go to about seven fairs a year," says this woman who was born two years before the turn of the century. "I make baskets too, out of honeysuckle vine—you know there's plenty of that growing. I gather my own honeysuckle vine. That's interesting. And then of course you have to boil it and take the bark off and keep your vine wet while you work it. I suppose I'll be demonstratin' that at the Parkway again this summer—man wrote me and asked if I'd come back. Suits me—I like to go up and sit there on that big porch through the summer and make baskets . . . . watch the people."

Yeah, I keep pretty busy. In fact I'm getting ready now to go to a fair in Raleigh the 27<sup>th</sup> of next month. Oh, I enjoy it and I usually take a lot of stuff and don't generally come back with much of it.

"I love to weave. It really is fascinating work. Just get interested and forget about your problems if you've got 'em which we all do. Sit down at the loom and forget all about 'em. Gives you a . . . a *real* good feeling. Oh, you'd enjoy it so much. I do, I know that."

Up a flight of stairs covered by a runner she wove herself, Estella works in a sunlit attic room. Her looms stand to either side of the window; both are old and beautiful, both are of local manufacture. The smaller one was "bought off a neighbor over toward Banner Elk" and Estella uses it now to weave mats. "A

man here in Watauga County" made the big loom, and he made it well. By now the shuttle has banged a burnished hollow into the beater where it has come to rest after countless sweeps across the warp, but the loom weaves smoothly on. It is built in the old style: lots of hefty timber, few metal fasteners.

Estella says that modern looms operate much like these old ones "but of course they don't use great big logs nowadays like they used to use to make the looms. I guess older people had more room for big looms. Nowadays people don't build a house big enough to put one in."

In the midst of weaving a red-white-and-blue "Bicentennial" Whig Rose coverlet, Estella runs out of bobbin thread. She steps over to the bobbin-winder that her husband made from their son's discarded tricycle wheel some forty years ago. A small tribe of flies has been buzzing at the windowglass all morning—one now follows her over and flies at her face until she finally stops her winding and banishes the assailant with a well-timed swipe. "Law, I think I'm besieged by that fly, don't you?" she remarks without vexation.

"Well, I've got my ammunition now," says Estella, laying the full shuttles down on the cloth before her and settling back onto her bench.

"Somebody down at the Southern Living Show one time told me 'you *sure* look like you enjoy your work.' I told 'em *I do*. I don't generally work until I'm so tired I can't enjoy it—I sorta try to take things in moderation. You could just sit down and weave 'til you got tired of it, I guess. I don't know, I never have gotten to that point."

"So . . . . (she laughs) I hope I can keep on weaving quite awhile and make quite a few more bedspreads."



*Pieced and Applique quilt,  
Blue Lone Star, 1975, 72" x 88",*

**FERRUM CRAFT SHOP/HANDCRAFTERS**



Tuesday is quilting day here at the Ferrum Craft Shop. The quilts which hang for sale in this shop are the work of these days. Old friends gather around the quilting frames upstairs and before half the news and stories and jokes are shared, another quilt is whole in its puckered beauty.

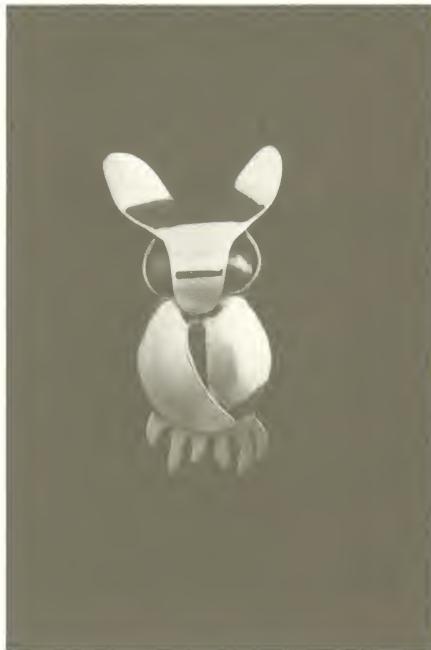
Here, Eletha ("Call me Lee".) Coales and Mary Tinsley work on a double wedding ring quilt. Mary, who was born in 1896 and started sewing as a four-year-old at the turn of the century, is obviously loved by all the quilters here for her skill, energy, and boundless good humor.

"I poked holes right through my hand," Mary reports of her first two years of sewing. "But by the time I was six I carried that thimble around with me!"



*Eletha Coales (left) and Mary Tinsley at work.*  
Ferrum, Virginia 26088

**FERRUM CRAFT SHOP/HANDCRAFTERS**



*Jewelry,  
Silver Owl,  
1976,  
height: 1 1/2",  
hand-fabricated sterling silver and tiger's eye.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$20)  
None*

FLOYD WILSON (1918- )/SILVERSMITH/MINERALOGIST

Floyd Wilson ("Minerals Rocks Jewelry" the sign says) got his start from his cousin.

"Back before the mineral-collecting craze came on," Floyd remembers, "you could find lots of beautiful things in these little gopher mines. You know people would dig a load of feldspar out and take it in for a sack of flour, groceries enough to do a week.



Box 65

Micaville, North Carolina 28755

Now, with the big companies it's all, y'know, they're gonna take a whole mountain off. There's no more of these little mines. But when there was my cousin mined like that and he'd always have a whole pile of pretty garnets and things."

"So pretty soon I got interested in minerals and went to those old mine dumps to dig and bang around. That was about twenty-three years ago, right when mineral collecting was being born again."

At first Floyd scoured the neighboring states in an old car. Starting out in the commercial mineral business was "like being a baby learning to crawl," Floyd says. "Sometimes the crawling got pretty rough." But soon Floyd was able to go as far as California and Mexico in search of choice stock—and put to rest his neighbor's talk that he was slightly addled for "wanting to fool around with a bunch of old rocks."

Three years into mineral collecting, Floyd took up jewelry-making. He spent the next two years at Penland School under a teacher who was "extremely good in design" and "would never give you a compliment."

"We got an awful lot of criticism," Floyd reports. "It's hard to take but it's very good for you because a beginner wants to do a masterpiece to start with. He wants attention, y'see, and wants to do just a little better . . . so he'll gum up his work with a lot of junk around it to where his eye's playin' all over it . . . because he don't really see what the teacher sees. They know it's the *simple* things."

Those lessons have stayed with Floyd. He keeps his work simple. He criticizes himself.

"There's no way you can fool the public on jewelry or minerals," Floyd says, "because the guy that's got the money has got the brains. If you don't make it good enough you're not going to stay in it."

"When you think that you're *good* that's when you're fixing to

(continued on back)

**FLOYD WILSON (1918- )/SILVERSMITH/MINERALOGIST**

flop, because you've ceased to learn then. As long as you're criticizing yourself you're still going to have the hope in mind to keep growing. I was telling my wife the other day, as long as you're wanting to do something, you've got something to live for."

"In my eyes," Floyd Wilson says, "to be *recognized* for doing something with your hands is really worth more than money."

*Musical instrument,  
replica: 14th century hurdy-gurdy,  
1976,  
length: 24", width: 13",  
cherry and spruce.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$800 with case)*



**GEORGE KELISCHEK (1930- )/INSTRUMENT MAKER  
HISTORICAL INSTRUMENTS**

## SHAVINGS



There is a bit of the Mad Professor about George Kelischek. He opens up a plain, well-crafted wooden box. Inside rests an instrument as *un*-plain and uncommon as anything one is likely to see: a hurdy-gurdy. It is remarkable just as an object but, like all of George Kelischek's creations, it also makes music.

As George cranks the hurdy-gurdy, a rosin-coated wheel sets three strings into song. Two strings drone; the third sounds a melody against them. The effect is much like a bagpipe.

The pitch of this melody string is shaped by "tangents"—thin wooden wedges which change the string length as their corresponding keys are fingered. George lifts an inlaid cover to reveal these tangents, and demonstrates how each one is adjustable through an arc to create sharps and flats. Near by is the rosined wheel, which seems to be made out of . . . . er, ah, a *plywood*.

In this otherwise unsullied fourteenth century replica, can such a thing be right?

"Ah hah," exclaims George. "The old hurdy-gurdy makers used applewood, and hoped that their wheels would not shrink out of concentricity. Of course they always did, and then you got a terrible yai-eee yai-eee yai-eeeeee!"

"Plywood," he states simply, "is a dimensionally stable material."

In a corner of the shop, krumhorns hang in rows. They look like canes with holes in them.

Krumhorns are medieval capped-double-reed instruments, and George's shop makes quite a few of them, he explains.

Then he brings forth what looks like a fat recorder.

"This," George asserts, "is a Kelhorn—an instrument I have created. In doing so I have *reversed the mental processes*."

As George presses quietly on in his slight German accent, his eyes emit a gleam.

"Usually an instrument is designed to create a certain sound and the musicians must play it as best they can. On the krumhorn, for instance, the long air column necessitates that you must hold your fingers out *here*," he says, arms stretched groping into space.

"I took the human hand, traced it onto the drawing table, and from this point proceeded to design the Kelhorn. The secret is this—" George points to piece of wood with a serpentine channel routed end-to-end.

*(continued on back)*



Here are a Krumhorn and a Kelhorn framed within the halves of a Kelhorn air-column. Because of this "folded" air-column, the Kelhorn can generate a much deeper note than a Krumhorn of similar size.

The life of George Kelischek revolves around music. This alone does not make George a rare man. Surely music is a great enthusiasm of our age. But George brings more than mere enthusiasm to his pursuit of music. He brings the formidable skills of an accomplished musician, craftsman, and engineer.

It shows in the instruments he builds.

George started building instruments as a hobbyist in his German homeland. A cabinet-maker by trade, he liked to sing choral music and go folk-dancing in his off-hours.

After an apprenticeship in violin and historical instrument-making, George opened his own instrument works in 1955. Four years later he came to America, drawn by the beauty of the Appalachians and the country way of life.

Today George is settled in a magnificently-appointed shop in the hills surrounding Brasstown. The John C. Campbell Folk School is just a jog up the road. Neighbors on all sides pursue crafts of their own. This is an area rich in talent, in tools, in appreciation of the particular demands and rewards of the artisan's life.



Brasstown, North Carolina 28902

The instruments made here in the Kelischek Workshop are not indigenous to the Appalachians, as George is quick to point out.



Kelischek dulcimers, though crafted of Appalachian hardwoods, trace their roots back to Europe. (Of course, so do the settlers who have sounded the hills with them.) The other instruments George builds—historical curiosities such as the hurdy-gurdy, cornetti, krumhorn, viola da gamba, and others from the pre-Classical period—are not Appalachian instruments by any stretch of the imagination.

Perhaps someday, they will be.

George envisions a great school here, a school of instrument building and repair which could answer the "crying need" for two or three hundred top-flight technicians. Citing economic growth figures for the music industry—figures startlingly high for the "luxury sector" in these hard times—George declares that a small army of skilled workers could be put to work at once.

If George were general of this army, it's soldiers would be versatile: experts at building and playing at least one instrument or instrumental family; proficient enough to repair and play upon others.

*(continued on back)*

**GEORGE KELISCHEK (1930- )/INSTRUMENT MAKER**  
**HISTORICAL INSTRUMENTS**

Even now George conducts summer workshop in instrument building and, here in the middle of winter, works closely with his sons Michael and Thomas, and two apprentices from the disparate states of New York and Alaska.

Everything about the Kelischek Workshop projects the fabled Teutonic efficiency. Each tool in the vast array is in its place, sharp and well-oiled. Every move is made deliberately. The workday here is long and steady-this is no place to tinker and loaf.

Yet all this order is but a means to an end.

"Making instruments is fun," George says softly. "It beats stamping out repetitious parts with a big die-stamping press.

"The painters, the sculptors, those that make etchings—they are certainly artists and they can get great satisfaction out of their work. In the case of the sculptor it's even three-dimensional. But making musical instruments has even more dimensions than that. In addition to the three dimensions, every musical instrument is a tool, an extension of the breath, the hands, the feet or whatever. A violin is a genuine machine. It does something.

"Sound, the fourth dimension of a musical instrument, is something that is not inherent in a sculpture or a painting. Of course, pottery can carry a piece of water from point A to point B, and in that sense a violin can carry a piece of music from my brain to your brain using the media of a violin.

"That's the reason I like to make musical instruments, because in addition to being creative with materials and gaining the satisfaction of doing something with my hands, I can when I'm

finished not only look at it and feel it and touch it and smell it, but also use it to make music. That is why I feel that there is no field that gives one greater reward than musical instrument-making."

"Of course," he says with a smile, "I may be prejudiced in some way."



(continued)

"I have folded a string-length or air-column of five feet into this short length and so created an instrument which is essentially identical to the krumhorn *except* that it takes half the space, half the wood, half the money to make. And with its compact fingering it is much easier to play, even for children.

"Watch."

George plays the Kelhorn.

This man has created a paradox.

As a *shape* for trained breath to pass through, nothing could be more convoluted than the air-column of George Kelischek's "Kelhorn."

But as a *solution* to a mechanical problem of musical production-nothing could be more direct.



*Woodcarving,  
guinea,  
1975  
height: 5 1/2",  
cherry.*

*(Not for Sale—Courtesy at the John C. Campbell Folk School)*

**GLENN BROWN (1916- )/WOODCARVER**



"Other than as something to carve," I ask Glenn, "what do you think of a guinea bird?" Do you like them?"

He studies the question for a moment.

"Naw, I don't," he offers. "I hate a guinea. They make more racket than any . . . are you acquainted with them?" he asks in return.

"A little."

"Well, I think it's a credit to the guinea family how many guineas there are still around," Glenn laughs.

Like their fellow carver Jack Hall, Glenn and Hope Brown don't think much of today's tools, blaming re-processed steel for



Brasstown, North Carolina 28902

this state of affairs.

"The old knives had lodestone in 'em," Glenn remarks, "and whether or not a knife would pick up filings was a pretty good test."

"Oh yes," agrees Hope, "when you sharpened a knife if the filings stuck to the blade you knew you had a good one."

"The best knife I ever got I got it in a swap," Glenn recalls. It was a Camillus. This fellow said 'I've got a real knife.' But he wanted some boot, fifty cents, and I didn't have it. He said how much you got and I said thirty-five cents and he let me have it. So I brought it home and it was the best knife I've ever used. Always sharp. But I've never found another one that good in that brand of knife. I even took down the numbers on it to see if I could get another one like it, but just like everything else they're just not like they used to be. That's all there is to it."

"Even real good wood is gettin' scarce. Especially real good butternut, or a good-whittlin' walnut—them's gettin' scarce. Now if you get a tree that's growed back in the mountains, growed fast, it's easy whittlin'. You get an old burly tree that's growed around a branch-bank and you can't whittle it for nothin'.

"-Why?"

"The fast-growin' trees are more porous."

"-Is the easy-whittling wood the prettiest, too?"

"No, they say the prettier the grain, the harder to whittle. But," Glenn adds, "I'd rather have the easy-whittling piece." Now buckeye's an easy wood to whittle."

"But it'll ruin your knife," says Hope, "the acid in the wood, I guess."

Glenn prefers to work in walnut and cherry. "That old white wood hurts my eyes when the light hits it," he complains. "I don't see how Hope carves it."

*(continued on back)*

**GLENN BROWN (1916- )/WOODCARVER**

Glenn and Hope started carving together in the early days of the Brasstown Carvers. "It took us a couple-three years to catch on to it, and to get the routine of it," Glenn says.

"We stayed with it," Hope offers. "We've been carving thirty-five years or more. Jack Hall's ahead of us some. We come next in line after Jack, I guess."

"You know, they didn't preach carvin' then the way they do now," Glenn proclaims. "They push crafts now. Then, it was more or less on the reserve side, you know. If you got a piece of carving by Hope or Jack (Hall) you were pretty fortunate. That created an interest in it to where people would come and buy it and I think that's what built the Campbell School up. When you try to push somethin', *then* it ain't as much value as if you hold it in reserve, the way I look at it."

(continued in "Hope Brown")



Woodcarving,  
Blue Heron,  
1974  
height: 9",  
cherry.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$35)

(Courtesy of the artist)

GOINGBACK CHILTONSKEY (1907- ) /CARVER/SCULPTOR

# SHAVINGS



Mary Ulmer Chiltoskey, Goingback's wife, is a published authority on Cherokee life and history. She explains that the feathers of the blue heron, (which Goingback has rendered here in cherry) were used years ago by Cherokee "peace chiefs."

"Oh yes," she affirms, "the Cherokees had two chiefs—a peace chief and a war chief. The war chief wore red and performed such duties as his name would imply. The peace chief, who was also a religious leader, wore a cape of the breast-feathers of the wild turkey, and a head-dress of aquatic bird feathers.

The clothing of "Indian Woman" is typical of a certain Cherokee period, Mary explains, and produces a photograph of Goingback's family from 1910 in which his mother is dressed just like the carving.

"Guess what she's carrying in the bag?" Mary asks, pointing to the holly figure.

I fumble around and am pronounced *wrong* with increasing force at each erroneous guess. Mary seems on the verge of exasperation. "What would puff out like that and not weigh the bag down?" she suggests as a clue.

"Feathers?"

A sorry shake of the head.

"GREENS!" she says with a smile.



*Woodcarving,  
Indian Woman,*

*1972,*

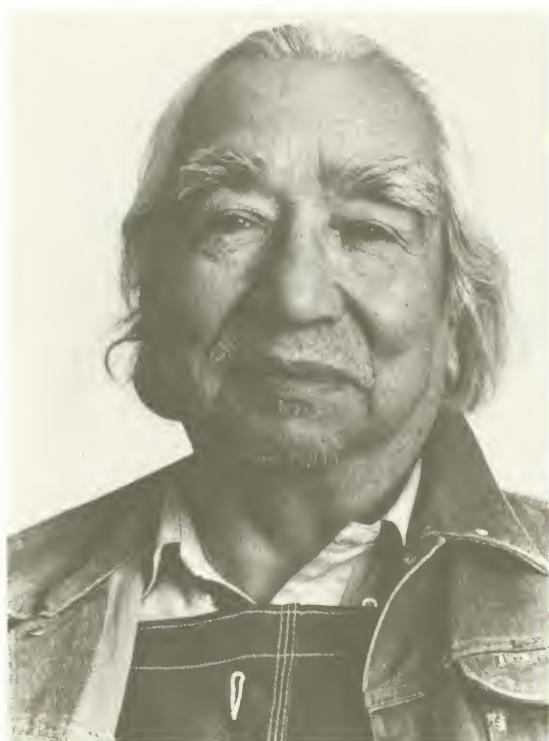
*height: 7",*

*holly.*

*(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artist)*

Goingback Chiltoskey's printed image is quintessentially "Indian." He is often referred to as a great artist "of his people" in text enhanced by his classic and inscrutable visage.

True it is that he wore a long skirt and long braids until the age of twelve, when first he grappled with English in the Cherokee Boundary School.



Star Route, Box 15  
Cherokee, North Carolina 28719

From there Goingback went to the Parker District School in South Carolina to take advantage of their outstanding woodworking program. He studied further at the Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas, and began to explore crafts other than woodworking at the U.S. Indian School in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In 1935 Goingback returned home to teach woodworking and carving at the Cherokee High School, inspiring such promising students as Amanda Crowe.

Yet in the flesh, Goingback's personality overflows the mold of the noble Red Man.

As the Second World War approached, Goingback became a modelmaker for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. After the fighting, he was for a time a partner in a Hollywood architectural model-making firm. These experiences—as much as his tribal origins—have shaped the man.

We sit in Goingback's nearly-completed, sprawling ranch-style "dream house," visiting in the light of the vast picture window by the fireplace. Goingback reveals that he found the U.S. Army a "very fine employer." He particularly liked being introduced to fiberglass during his stint with the Corps of Engineers—and would work with it today if it were "more practical for what I'm doing." "You could lift those fiberglass maps with one hand," he reports delightedly, "where it took four men to lift the plaster-of-paris maps we were making when I first started out."

"The work was a tremendous education to me," Goingback summarizes, because I can work with all kinds of materials now—almost any kind of material that's out now." Then, inexorably, the talk turns to this house that lately absorbs so much of his energy.

"I dreamed about this house for ten years while I was with the government in Washington," Goingback says. "I drew plans, made little models. I saw enough other houses in my travels to

*(continued on back)*

**GOINGBACK CHILTONSKEY (1907- ) /CARVER/SCULPTOR**

learn what I wanted for myself."

Today, as Goingback sits in the house he has dreamed about, his reknowned art is swept somewhere to the periphery. Each time he is asked about a piece of his here in the room, he curtly replies and becomes voluble again only when returning to the subject of his beloved abode.

"The only thing I paid full price for was these windows you see . . . it's a double, uh—Thermo-glass. This carpet, I got it from a friend who runs a warehouse in Johnson City. Look, just like new, and you wouldn't believe what I paid for it." He names a very low figure, and smiles.

"I built these cabinets out of birch veneer myself," Goingback remarks, ushering us into the kitchen. "You can't get what I wanted so I had to build them myself. I hate to rub these things out—takes so much time—but it'll be worth it when I'm done.

"Look here," he points with a flourish as we reach a bathroom threshhold, "most houses are cramped (he screws up his face in pain at the word) in the bathroom. You have to turn sideways to sit on the darn toilet. Not here."

He goes on at great length about the construction details of the house; how he plumbed and wired it himself, how he got friends and acquaintances to help with the masonry-work, how he got dirt from a church-basement excavation at a dollar a load and with it built up his lot to three feet above the flood-level of the notorious river which runs through his backyard.

It is all very interesting. But it is time to go and I have the ludicrous feeling that I have spent time with a great *energy*, perhaps even a great building contractor, but not, in any first-hand way, with a "Great Indian Artist."

A parting remark reveals the foolishness of my feeling.

On a bookcase Goingback made, next to a magnificent carved

fiddle which is also his work, stands an imposing gold trophy. "Did you get that for woodcarving?" I ask.

"No no" Goingback replies. "I got it for shooting the blow-gun. I am the blow-gun champion of Cherokee. Do you wanna see my blow-gun?" I nod and Goingback opens the front-hall closet to reveal a lustrous length of reed. I remark that it looks brand new and Goingback laughs. "This blow-gun was old when I was a boy."

"I learned to shoot when I was very young. I was a good shot and could shoot birds in flight. You can kill a fair-sized bird with these things but I learned not to do it because the bird will fly a long way before it dies and you'll never find the bird or your dart."

Sliding a row of garments to one side, Goingback exposes a stuffed target and offers to demonstrate his aim. He steps well back across the spacious room. "This is the secret," he says cupping his hand around his mouth and puffing, "the air seal. It is here that you generate your power."

Then with one hand Goingback raises the long reed to his lips as casually as a drinker might lift a beer. Suddenly there is a *pffff* and a soft simultaneous thwack. A dart quivers in the bull's-eye. Two more darts follow. The missles form a tight cluster across the room.

In truth, there is no way of separating Goingback's art, his house, and his deadly aim. They are all mere reflections of his facility. Goingback is masterful in many circumstances, and at home nearly anywhere.

If Goingback Chiltoskey stands astride two worlds, he has his feet firmly planted in both of them.

*The Whig Rose is a reproduction of a pattern found only in East Tennessee. It is said to commemorate the founding of the Whig Party under Andrew Jackson's administration.*



*Weaving,  
Whig Rose Bedspread,  
1975*

*90" x 108",  
48% virgin wool, 52% cotton.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$125)*

**GOODWIN GUILD/WEAVERS**

## SHAVINGS



Towards the end of his long life, the late John Owen Goodwin moved the Goodwin Guild to this site here in Blowing Rock, North Carolina. Today the Guild is run by his daughter, Mary Goodwin, with the help of his grandchildren—Mary's sister's children, the Harmans. Robert ("call me Butch") and Michael are machine and production specialists; Margaret handles the office workload; David, a C.P.A., does the books; and John, though he is employed with the telephone company, shares the insider's savvy of his siblings.

"When Granddad was really slowing down," Margaret fondly recalls, "he would sit here in the office and just listen to those looms. When coffee-break was over and he didn't hear those machines start up again he'd go out there and say 'I don't know *what* time it is.'

He wasn't a mean man—he just loved the work. Why we used to say he'd pay someone to let him weave."

Butch claims that old John would "flog you if you called this a mill. He called it a weave-shed, but we call it a mill."

Butch breaks off to tend to the vagaries of a balky loom. He is deft and intent. After much tinkering and not a few false starts his poised hand finally drops from the kill-switch and the loom restores its beat to the rythym symphony of the room. Before and after repairs, the stranger detects no change. But to Butch each sweep of the shuttle now says aaaah, thank you.

The furrows in Butch's brow ease in reply.



**Robert Harmon**

"I grew up in this trade," he says. "Had to cut it loose for awhile. I drove a tractor-trailer for a year-and-a-half and then came back here."

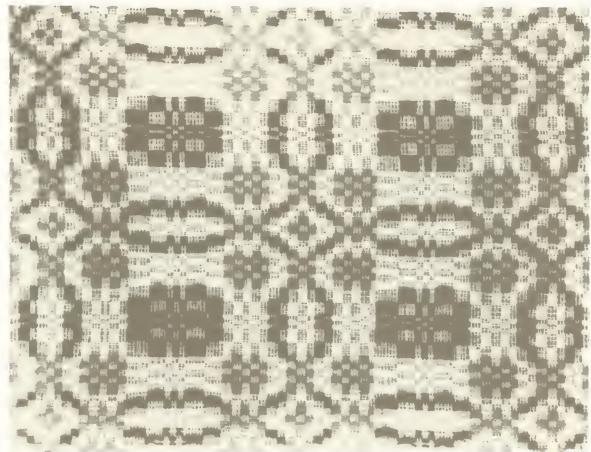
"I had to get away to appreciate it."

The clacking looms here at Goodwin Guild Weavers are no spring chickens—the newest of eight was in use by last century's end. Yet, when the ore to make this loom still slumbered in the earth, the Goodwin family had been weaving for at least four generations.

The John Goodwin estate in England hosted silk weavers by 1812, and a son named James Cash who left the domain at age 21 when father John meted him out an undeserved whipping.

James survived a shipwreck en-route to America, met his wife-to-be on the rescue vessel, and brought his family name and trade safely to these shores.

The Goodwin mills moved periodically through the southeastern states. One reason was James' only son, Charles Eugene. Charles had what the family calls "gypsy feet," and he used them. "Oh, he always had to see what was over the next hill



*Detail of Whig Rose Pattern*

or in the next state," claims his granddaughter Mary Goodwin. Then sometimes the forces of nature pushed the Goodwins on, as they did on that morning in Virginia when a mill-hand sent out word that he couldn't tend his loom because he was down with smallpox. "Charles thought of his eight children maybe catching that smallpox," says Mary, "and he threw everything in a wagon and left."

John Owen Goodwin (1889-1973) was one of the eight children to make that hasty exile. When John was just seven he hopped up on a box to better view the family looms, then on the Clinch River in Tazewell County, Virginia. From that moment of initiation, he gave seventy-nine years of avid effort to his beloved craft.

As he grew, John journeyed through the Appalachians in a covered wagon, making camp to trade wool blankets and linsey cloth for virgin wool. In those days before central heating, Mary reports, good wool blankets were a staple item.

*(continued on back)*



*Mike Harmon and Butch Isenkower arrange the warp of an eighty-year old loom.*

**Box 314**

**Blowing Rock, North Carolina 28605**

**GOODWIN GUILD/WEAVERS**

Along with raw wool and raw country, John saw the coverlets that proud mountain women brought to his rolling home. He made record of their patterns in a weaver's shorthand, collecting literally hundreds of designs.

This Whig Rose bedspread—one of the Guild's most popular weavings—is a legacy of John Owen Goodwin's travels.



Copper enamelling,  
cloisonné,  
*The Lord Is My Shepherd*,  
1972,  
11 1/2" x 23",  
copper plates, enamel, cloisonné wire, veneer-faced plywood.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artists)

GUS AND MAGGIE MASTERS (1903- )  
(1912- ) / ENAMELLISTS/ CLOISONNÉ



*Copper enamelling,  
cloisonné,  
Crucifix,  
1973,  
height: 5 1/2",  
copper, enamel, cloisonné wire.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artists)*

In 1951 Gus and Maggie Masters were living in California and looking for a hobby they could share. In an enamelling class—part of a dollar-per-semester adult education program—they found it.

Maggie enjoyed the *speed* of the enamelling process. "We started out in ceramics," she recalls, "and I couldn't bear that . . . a week long for it to dry, then you put something on it and you fire it and then you put something else on and . . . With enamelling you color your work almost like you're painting, pop it in the kiln and pull it out in one minute. It's so immediate that you can see everything that you do."

The Masters found a ready market for their work from the beginning, first at Maggie's office, then on the road during a year-long travelling honeymoon. "We'd make the enamels in camp," Gus explains, "and then take 'em to the nearest town

and sell 'em. Our initial equipment was no more than twenty dollars; a Bernz-o-matic torch, a pair of shears, and a sheet of copper. Back in those days you could buy a great big sheet of copper for a few dollars."

Maggie pulls out a faded Kodacolor; it shows the couple at work in the desert, heating copper with a torch in the lee of their split-windowed Volkswagen. On a stunning piece from that journey, bighorn sheep leap in a blue-enamel field. It is one of the Master's few souvenirs.

"We used to make about two thousand pieces a year and you can see what we've got left—about a dozen pieces," Gus remarks.

"We started out in jewelry," Maggie adds, "and we always thought 'oh jewelry, that's the last thing anybody would buy!' But it isn't. They'll buy jewelry at the same time they'll buy a loaf of bread. It really is funny. You think 'gee, they can do without jewelry' but it turns out that people want the gratification of buying what they consider beautiful. We never had any problems during recession or times when people were saying that enamelling was 'out.' Never."

"You'd see people that didn't look like they could afford to buy your work at all and they'd come and buy a tray for forty-five dollars . . . they'd save up to buy these things that enrich their lives."

Gus and Maggie came to North Carolina in 1955, set up shop, and "began enamelling in earnest."

For five years Maggie "just worked on surfaces," exploring the range of effects which can be achieved on enamelled copper. "Color has always meant so much to me, and I don't think there's any other media that color is so rich in," Maggie says sincerely. "You have depth, and shadings, and any color in the spectrum. I've tried all *sorts* of things—putting an opaque under a transparent . . . with modern materials the variety is endless."

*(continued on back)*



Brasstown, North Carolina 28902

## GUS AND MAGGIE MASTERS (1903- )

(1912- ) / ENAMELLISTS/CLOISONNE

Today books and teachers guide the novice into this wealth of possibility, but when the Masters were starting out they were on their own. Gus was the troubleshooter—and he loved it.

"You quit work at five o'clock with a problem, unsolvable, and by about two o'clock in the morning you sit up in bed with the answer. What makes it so exciting is that one thing," Gus says. "*Problems.*"

"We had all sorts of *crazy* things *all* the time, things that we'd never thought of or nobody else had ever thought of. You think you'll never be able to solve 'em but, you solve everything."

"We had a good team," Gus says with satisfaction. "Maggie was the artist and I was the mechanic. With that combination we could do 'most anything."

"Gus was a civil engineer," Maggie reveals, so he was the one who balanced the mobiles."

Soon after coming to the mountains, the Masters were accepted into the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild. "When the Guild decided to broaden their crafts program, they approached us to come to Brasstown and teach enamelling," Maggie says. "We've had about twenty sessions at least I guess, and in every class about ten people. And in every class we'd have, about four or five of that group would be regulars who'd been with us the whole time and they'd just come back and it'd be like a little club y'know."

"Most of them were mature people. This is the area where I think the school can be of tremendous service if we can just get

our publicity out so that it hits these people. People who retire now are younger than they used to be and they live longer and they need something to keep them active. A lot of people we work with have gotten so involved with it that they, well, they don't make a business of it but they make all of their own Christmas presents and they have an enjoyment that they didn't have until they made contact with the crafts.

"This is a very real area for the crafts today."

Maggie is in a unique position to act on her convictions. Along with Gus she has recently been named co-director of the John C. Campbell Folk School, taking on a larger role here where she has taught with such love and enthusiasm through the years.

In the sometimes high-powered world of arts-and-crafts education Maggie is an anachronism—a warm and down-to-earth person before all else. She and Gus have come a long way on that dollar investment so long ago in California, and she likes nothing more than to share the joy her art has brought her.

"You should see a class of ours sometimes," Maggie beams. We'll have maybe thirty-five people and at least a third of them are kids, around thirty and under, and the rest of them are adults up to eighty. And they get along so well. That's the wonderful thing about learning, and doing something with your hands. It acts as a great leveler . . . there's no generation gap, no one looking down their nose saying 'oh he's an old fuddy-duddy' or 'she's just a young whippersnapper.'

"There's just this loving feeling of . . . we're all making beautiful things together."



*Woodcarving,  
Goose Girl,  
1975,  
height: 4",  
buckeye.*

*(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the John C. Campbell Folk School)*

**HOPE CALER BROWN (1915- )/WOODCARVER**



### HOPE BROWN'S SOLILOQUY

Whittle, whittle all day long,  
Whittle, with a happy song;  
Bit by bit we take them down  
From apple tree so hard and sound.

Fashion with a knife the block;  
Oh, it wouldn't do to stop  
"Til at last the work's complete,  
Shavings round us in a heap.

Thrilling is the work by hand,  
Done to fill the world's demand.  
All impressions from the mind,  
In these carvings you will find.

Takes our minds from worldly care  
While we carve an Angel fair.  
Fills us with a thought divine,  
Makes us want to be more kind.

Then the carving of the Child,  
On it meditate awhile;  
Worthy of the best of skill  
Fashioned with a tender will.

As I readied to leave, Hope offered me this, her poem. It was mimeographed in a green folder with a drawing of an angel and "Praise We The Lord Who Made All Beauty For All Our Senses To Enjoy" on the cover.

It is here reproduced from Hope's folder.

Carved from best of holly tree  
Oh, may it then a symbol be -  
The wood so white,  
The Child so pure.

To carve a cat to show content  
To me, that is a day well spent.  
To carve a curve with patient care,  
For some to see the labor there.

To carve a birdie on a rock,  
Pausing in flight to a high tree top,  
Makes me think, oh lovely thing,  
She's looking for a place to sing.

One by one my blocks take shape  
Then I hardly dare to wait.  
For the comment of my friends  
When they see where whittling ends.

Shavings, shavings all around,  
Sweep them up in one great mound;  
On the table now we see  
Lines and curves where once were these.

HOPE CALER BROWN, Woodcarver

"Well you can see when everybody gets in on it," Hope explains, "you're gonna find just a few that'll stay with it and they'll make a nice piece of carving out of it, but a lot of 'em are carving just for the money where us older ones were taught if we done a piece of carving to do it well so that the person who



*Carving in the first morning light.*  
Brasstown, North Carolina 28902

received it could appreciate it.

"I get lots of letters from people. Now this week Glenn's doing an eagle and we got a card from a lady up in Pennsylvania who'd received about the third eagle he'd made, to tell us how much she appreciated it. If people buy 'em of course and we never see 'em why don't think much about that but if someone comes and buys a piece and then writes us later that gives us contact with 'em and they usually tell us a little somethin' about themselves, and we think about *that* and what the carving means to 'em . . . when people take *time* to write and tell you that they appreciate your carving then you *do* realize that there are some people who know how much time and everything you put into it. And that means a lot to you to know that somebody really appreciates what you worked to achieve."

"I'd rather not think of the dollar, really," Glenn remarks. "If I didn't have to live, I wouldn't. You see our interest has been in the work more so than it has been in the dollar. It gives you a good feeling to know that somebody really appreciates what you worked to achieve."

Hope displays her years of work, tenderly and with quiet pride. It is clear that she loves these pieces, loves to make them, and is still thrilled by their power to move others.

"People who work in factories," she observes, "their work is already laid out—they know exactly what they're going to be doing all day. But you take carving—no two pieces of carving ever come out exactly alike.

"No two carvers ever do the same subject alike. They—I don't hardly know how to express this—they carve to the way they *see* the thing—"

"And people that sees like you do'll buy 'em," Glenn interjects, "and the others won't."

Glenn and Hope share a laugh. Then Hope smiles and shakes

*(continued on back)*

**HOPE CALER BROWN (1915- )/WOODCARVER**

her head at a memory.

"We had a neighbor once who was kindly fussy-like about things," Hope recounts. "She didn't think—well, she didn't like me *too* well, and what had happened y'know was some of her cows had got out on us and I raised a kick about it.

"So I was going to the Folk School one morning—my neighbor had the country store nearby us—and she said 'I want to see what you got there is your basket.' And I stopped and I had my carved angels with me that morning.

"She looked in there and said '*Hmmmmph!* Anybody that can do angels like that can't be *all* bad.' "



INA HAGAMAN (1905- )/CORNSHUCK DOLL MAKER

*Cornshuck dolls,  
Frontier Lady,  
1975,  
height: 9 1/2",  
cornshuck.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$15)*



"This is a hard and particular kind of craft," Ina Hagaman observes. "If you don't love it you won't stay with it. People learn how to make these dolls and they do two or three and they find out how tedious it is and they don't stay with it."



*"I can't get to do all I want to do. No way. My mind just goes too fast."*

Route 1, Box 158

Sugar Grove, North Carolina 28607

"Nobody knows the hours and the time I put into this," she says, holding up one of her pieces. "I do all my own designs—I just think about it and then go to work. I can't get to do all I want to do, No way—my mind just goes too fast."

Ina recalls that her father used to fashion toys and "us children would pick up the knife and try after him." With no irreverence Ina states that her own work is much nicer.

Over the years Ina has learned how to work with the qualities of these natural materials. She works the shuck while they're still moist because "the dry shucks're too 'brickle'." In fact, Ina actually grows her own corn when she needs a particular kind and ripeness of shuck. One of Ina's dolls, the "Frontier Lady," has a billowing ankle-length skirt made of the whole husk, cut off cleanly about halfway down the ear. Those skirts come from Ina's garden, where the growing stalks are patiently tended and watched until just the moment when they are ready to become part of another unique Hagaman doll.

Finickiness has its rewards. "People look at my cornhusk flowers," Ina smiles, "and say 'that's not cornhusk.' I say look a little closer."

This same woman who will part the earth and plant a seed to procure just the right raw materials is not averse to more modern methods. Her pieces are colored with Rit dyes and felt-tip pens.

"It works the best," she says simply.

## INA HAGAMAN (1905- )/CORNSHUCK DOLL MAKER

Woodworking,  
butterchurn,  
1976,  
height with handle: 27",  
diameter: 8 1/2",  
redwood and hickory.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$40)



IRIS HARMON (1911- )/WOODWORKER

"If you couldn't have a good time with that Iris, why, there'd have to be something wrong with you," one of Iris Harmon's neighbors insists. Indeed, on a cold day there is no nicer place to be than Iris's workshop, smile-to-smile with Iris and back to the roaring stove.



*"My daddy was a turrible hand to make most anything."*  
Route 3, Box 537  
Banner Elk, North Carolina 28604

Iris is as handy as he is friendly. He builds everything from houses to the dulcimer he is finishing here. That's not unusual in this section of the mountains where carpenters and instrument builders dot every ridge and hollow. But not many woodbutchers work at Iris Harmon's specialty; hickory-banded butter-churns.

"I don't guess there's too many people that could make them anymore," allows Iris. "Most of 'em nowadays uses some sort of metal band. It's pretty hard to set down and cut one of them bands to where he locks hisself in there and holds."

Iris has a jump on other would-be churnmakers.

"I learned to make a churn like this from my Daddy," Iris explains. "He was a turrible hand to make most anything. Back in the old hard days, he used to make a churn like this, spend maybe three days on it, and then sell it for fifty cents. He'd make them old big wooden tubs they called 'em to pickle beans and put molasses in."

Like his father, Iris has spent his life surrounded by wood-scent and shavings. It has been a good life, and Iris is glad to share it. As he moves with his work, he speaks of the many things he has built and the lessons learned building them. He quiets to hunt a tool, finds it, and speaks on.

"How in the world do you keep from leaving that stuff everywhere you go?" asks Iris with a nod towards my assembled photographic gear. "Tools is hard things to hold on to—I know. I remember one job I was on years back, some fellers and me was flooring a house. It was a cold day like this one, and we'd just got that floor boarded over when I started missing my hammer. I thought it mighta slipped down into the snow, so I looked all around there but I couldn't find it. Pretty soon I got to worrying that it was somewhere under the floor."

"Well, I come to find out I'd been carryin' it around in my hand the whole time I was a 'huntin' it," Iris says and stares at his cupped hand in amazement.

*(continued on back)*

**IRIS HARMON (1911- )/WOODWORKER**

We photograph Iris's churn. "Here," he says as I start out in the snow for my light-stands, "I'll hold that light for you."

Iris holds the floodlight steady as the sun, never losing his patience nor calm interest in this stranger who is eating up so much of the day moving a little click-box back-and-forth an inch at a time and pretending that it makes a difference.

Then, very quietly at first, Iris says "I'll tell you something you ought to take a picture of. My Daddy used to build water-wheels, big old wheels maybe eighteen-foot high, to run grist-mills and such—I used to help him. Well, my son has a fish-pond and I built a six-foot wheel to run over there. That wheel runs just as true by George as a wheel in a watch. There's not a crook or a wobble to it."



*Blown glass, vases,  
1975,  
left to right, height: 9 1/2", 6", 6",  
soda-lime glass, trace copper, cobalt, sulfur and selenium.  
(Opening Bid Prices—left to right: \$50, \$18, \$25)*

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JACK BREWER (1947- )/GLASSBLOWER

# SHAVINGS



Glass in stasis is an unyielding material. That is how most people know it: stable; durable; but (oops/crash/tinkle) highly resistant to change.

The glassblower knows a different substance. In the awesome furnace-heat, the glass molecules get excited and dance. Choreography, then, is the glassblower's art.

At the peak of the dance the pull of pointed steel, the press of shaped applewood, the gentle pressure of human breath moves the molten form towards the artist's inner vision. When that vision is achieved, the fire-music fades and the dancers freeze in embrace with their partners.

Outside the secret world of the studio, it is this tableau that we see.

Jack Brewer is quietly fierce about his glass. He has to be, because the demands of setting up and running a glass studio—to say nothing of the physical demands of blowing glass—are fierce. Even his clean-shaven face is a concession to his passion.



P. O. Box 526  
Blowing Rock, North Carolina 28605

"I never could grow a beard," Jack states, rubbing his naked chin. "Right when it starts to grow out it itches too much in the heat of the furnace, so I just keep shaving."

Jack approaches people with some caution, but he takes the physical world head-on. He built his present glass studio, replacing an earlier facility that burned. He makes his own soda-lime glass finding it easier to work with than commercial glass scrap of unknown quality. Jack hopes to learn enough smithing to forge his own tools. "The tools they sell on the market are just about worthless," Jack maintains.

Each weekday Jack rises early and drives the long stretch from his solitary dome shelter into Blowing Rock. There he manages a plant store full of green growing things, planters, terrariums, books and bone-meal and boxer dogs, and, in the back, Jack's glass and pottery. When asked if this business helps support his gas-hungry glass furnace, Jack smiles and shakes his head.

I wouldn't say that. I put about eight thousand dollars into that place that I've never seen again. What it really is, when my other place burned I lost all my plants. I got to missing them so bad that I started staying more at the store and pretty soon I was working there. Half of the plants in there aren't even for sale—they belong to me."

"Most people in the course of a day think about their life," Jack says. "I think about my work. It's necessary."

Jack points to a television, on but fuzzy and garbled. Above the roar of the furnace he shouts "I gotta keep that thing on or I get lost and work until three in the morning. I have to get up at six."

"I work in a kind of a strange situation. Except for at shows I rarely see anyone else's work. It's good in a way, because I'm less influenced that way. So many people in glass today are just

*(continued on back)*

**JACK BREWER (1947- )/GLASSBLOWER**

copying one another.

"Invariably when people learn that you blow glass they say 'oh, you must have wonderful lungs.' You don't use your lungs at all, you use your mouth.

"A woman at a show in Florida said, 'oh, a glassblower—no wonder you have such a big mouth.' I said 'you have one too.'

"She was so mad."



*Woodcarving,  
horse,  
1975,  
height: 9",  
applewood.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$75)*

JACK HALL (1921- )/WOODCARVER

# SHAVINGS



Perhaps the prettiest sight you can see in any hardware store of respectable vintage is the display of Case knives in the cutlery section. There they lay upon the green, glassed-over velvet, each blade gleaming; each handle asking for the curl of fingers. Here and there between the knives is the company's distinctive logo: "Case" written with the bottom of the C underlining the word; the familiar "XXX" trademark; and, for those who don't already know, the proud boast "World's Finest Cutlery" spelled out in unflinching letters.

Jack Hall is not impressed.

"I've whittled all my life," says Jack, "and I've never bought a knife in my life. I trade for 'em.

"Traders around here really like a Case knife. It's just a fad. To my mind they're the sorriest metal knife there is. There's so much monel and stainless in 'em that when you put 'em to the wheel they don't even spark. I'll take an old German Boker brand, about half wore out . . .

"The heck of it is, the Boker company is located in the United States now. They send over to Germany and put one German blade in their knives, very well marked. The rest of those blades

are American and there's as much difference between 'em as . . . (Jack scratches his temple) mashed potatoes and gruel. That's the truth.

"Why, we can put a man on the moon but these knives of today . . . There's girl in my carving class got a little knife put out before World War II, for advertising. It's better than any knife you can get today."

For all Jack's interest in knives as objects, what a well used knife can *do* is hardly lost on this man.

"You know a carver can put feeling into a piece and even if it's not realistic, the feeling comes through. My Uncle, he didn't carve nothing except that "Mad Mule" (a mule straining back against an imaginary rope). It's proportions are all wrong, its head is near as long as its body, but that mule was the sellinest piece there ever was."

Jack unfolds an old knife with most of the horn handle missing. The dirt filled letters on the blade near the hinge have a remembered slant to them.

"Remington Arms," they read.

"Remington used to make knives 'til they sold out to Camillus in 1936," says Jack. "Winchester made 'em too, but they went out earlier I think. I can still remember the last Remington knife I lost.

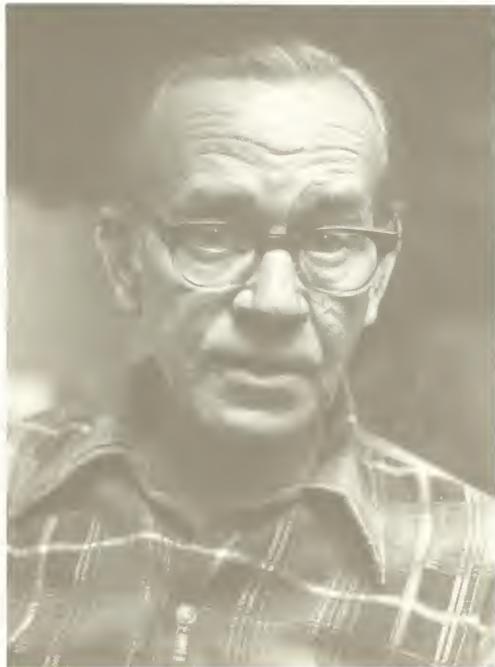
Jack puts down the tool and leans back in his chair.

"As long as I've known carvers," he confides, "I've never seen an accomplished carver quit. It hooks you. I've knowed 'em all—'cause I was a kid when they started.

"And near every one of 'em died with a knife in their hands."

Jack Hall sits at the head of the long table in the Campbell Folk School woodcarving shop. He dispenses patient advice and occasional first-aid to the novice carvers before him; a group of perhaps twenty college students from Sherman, Texas.

The shavings on everyone's lap look the same, but Jack's knife



*"Why gosh no, anybody is welcome in my home."*

Box 42

Warren, North Carolina 28909

alone goes through the grain with assurance. To one student, he describes a mouth as "an orange with a crease in it," then carves such a mouth. The knife renders instantly what the tongue labors to explain.

A straw-hatted Texan points to a picture above the table—in fact a picture of this same table, ringed with different faces.

"Right yonder's a picture of me when I was about twenty-five," Jack responds.

"You're right at the front of the class there too," says the pointer, impressed.

"Yep. I always sat at the head of the table. There's my Daddy and Uncle in that picture. I come from a carving family."

"I can't remember when I didn't have a knife and whittle. I was about twelve or fourteen when I took it up in earnest," Jack says. "Me and my Dad started carving for the school at the same time."

Jack explains that Brasstown men liked to roost on the long wooden bench at Boyd Scrogg's store. "They'd sit there and chew 'baccer and tell stories and whittle. They whittled it from one end to the other. Not figures, just shavings."

"And Miss Olive Campbell come around and said now why not whittle something that's worth something. So she brought blocks cut out in the profile of animals to whittle on.

"The people right around Brasstown never did take for it. The ones that took for it was ones like my Daddy out here in Clay County. There wasn't no close-in whittlers."

"Then Muriel Martin started giving classes. They'd sit under shade trees and she'd pass the blocks out to new carvers and give 'em all the instruction she could. She was good—she'd stay right with you and give you all the encouragement."

"That's how the Brasstown carvers got started, in about '35 or '36. I was just a beginner. I caught on quick. I had a little extra help, because my Daddy was a real accomplished carver."

"When World War II ended I was so damn homesick I came

*(continued on back)*

**JACK HALL (1921- )/WOODCARVER**

back here just as quick as I could. I'd saved up enough money to buy a farm and I just didn't like city life. I quit a tool-and-die job making three or four times what I could a'whittlin'. Just as quick as I got that first piece carved I sold it. And I've never been caught up since.

"You take whittling and farming," says Jack of his two main pursuits, "they're the same dang occupation. Ain't no foolishness to 'em."

If Jack is well-known for his carving he is fairly *famous* for his farm—but it is a strange sort of fame. His plot of earth is probably more familiar to the citizens of far-flung continents than it is to Jack's near-neighbors.

On celluloid, at least.

In 1950, when the State Department set out to make a film about a "Typical American" for overseas distribution, they contacted the Folk School. The school put them in touch with Jack.

"That was when everybody in Europe thought that everybody here lived with a silver spoon in their mouth," Jack

says.

He laughs. "I didn't know what I was getting into. I thought it'd be over with in two days. They was here the whole summer. They'd argue . . . the director'd sight through his hands . . . they'd argue all day and never shoot a picture.

"I had an old work shirt at the beginning of the summer—it was about in rags then. Well, they came back around Christmas to do a retake and by that time we'd *burned* it." He shakes his head and smiles. "We had a time trying to find a shirt to match it."

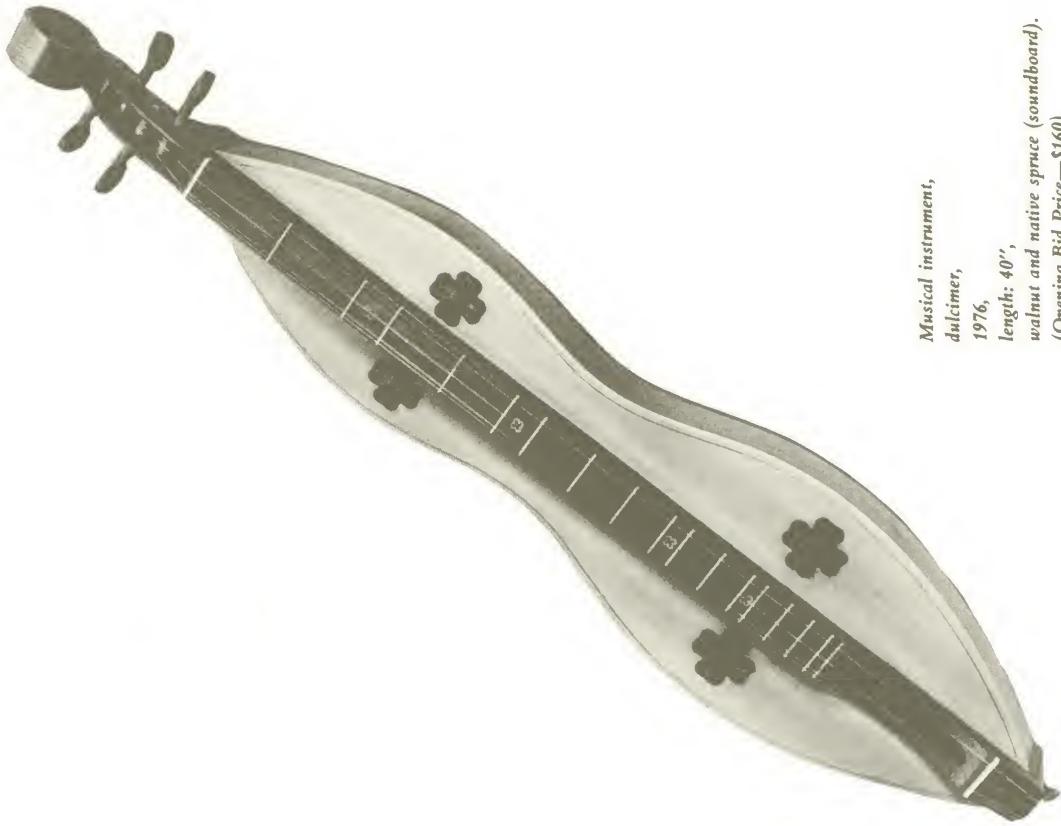
The film surmounted cornfield arguments and missing shirts to become a great success. Prints are available in fifty languages, and its showing is an annual event of the first water here at Campbell School.

The thought of his life projected before the eyes of so many strangers doesn't seem to bother Jack.

"Why gosh no, anybody is welcome in my home."

"Besides," he says without a trace of boast, "I've never met anybody I feel inferior to."

Mr. Trantham writes: "Design is traditional but modified slightly to produce better sound. Care is taken with fingerboard and string placement to make the dulcimer as playable as possible."



*Musical instrument,  
dulcimer,  
1976,  
length: 40",  
walnut and native spruce (soundboard).  
(Opening Bid Price—\$160)*

JAMES A. TRANTHAM (1931- )

INSTRUMENT-MAKER/DULCIMERS



I ask about a mark on the soundboard of Jim's guitar—was it in the grain of the wood?

"Nope," he replies. "That's where a tool slipped. I felt like crying for a couple of days.

"But I don't much care for somebody to say 'that's a pretty guitar.' I'd much rather for them to say 'that really has a ring to it.' That's what I want to create, something . . . intangible.

Because that guitar, anybody could step on it and it's done, y'know. But the music is gonna be here. You've locked it in, it's there, you've heard that thing sing. That's the goal. Dealing in wood I've often thought, now why don't I change to stone or copper so they'll look back in two or three hundred years and say 'there's a Trantham creation.' With wood, that's not gonna happen.

"Maybe an instrument will last a hundred years, y'know, if it's worthwhile somebody might take care of it and keep it in a case. Likely it's gonna last twenty-five or thirty years. It's not like a vase or something—it's gonna deteriorate, termites can work it over and it's gone.

"But beauty, music; these things are gonna be around in one form or another right along."

"I had to take up a craft in self-defense," Jim Trantham explains. "My father was a farmer—he didn't give a hang about crafts, but my mother and sisters all did crafts, so I was subjected to it. I never really took it up until I was a teenager. Got a few tools and did some carving, and some crude carpentry."

"My interest in the old-time music came at the same time. This town, this area was just at the breaking point then, where it was turning from a rural secluded lifestyle to being industrialized."

(Canton today is the site of a huge paper-mill. Jim is an employee).

"And tastes changed," Jim goes on. "They started bringing in canned music, and Tin Pan Alley. The old-time music was falling by the way—I would no longer hear the Dave Macon's and Aunt Samantha's that would come by here on Labor Day

and other special times. So I really saw perhaps the *last* of our real traditionally-oriented music. It was exciting for me then, y'know, I was impressionable.

"But it's really only in the last ten years I've gone back and reflected on it and tried to recapture some of it. It's been a study process, an academic excercise if you will, to go back and learn some of the things no twelve-fourteen year old boy's ever gonna learn, you know, forty verses of "The Cruel Ship's Carpenter," or one of the other long ballads. The music and the crafting have gone hand-in-hand and I vacillate . . . I work in the basement for a month or two on instruments and then I've got to come up and hear some new music."

Actually, it's not quite such an either/or proposition: Jim reports that he often plays Bascom Lamar Lunsford ballads down in the shop in an effort to learn them by "osmosis." "When my son Mark is down there helping me," Jim confides, "he likes that 'acid-rock.' "

Jim has made "about 150" dulcimers so far, averaging about twenty or thirty a year. He has also made himself a classical guitar and a banjo—Jim and son Chris duet on them in the photograph—as a relief from the routine of dulcimer production.

"Every year we get into some sort of foolishness to give ourselves a vacation," Jim explains. "This year it's spinning wheels.

"I never thought much of 'em as machines until recently I saw a woman using one at a fair. The real complexity and precision of it impressed me, so as a Bicentennial project I got some authentic Colonial plans and me and Mark are going to get the extra tools we need and turn out some spinning wheels for awhile.

"I don't expect I'll get any music out of 'em, though," he muses.

Jim's most recent musical departure is a hammer dulcimer, built in part from the cut-down sounding-board of an old piano. Jim

(continued on back)



*Jim and son Chris duet on Trantham built instruments.*

Route 3, Box 699  
Canton, North Carolina 28716

**JAMES A. TRANTHAM (1931- )**

**INSTRUMENT-MAKER/DULCIMERS**

acknowledges that he has yet to learn his way around the instrument: "It has almost endless sustain," he points out, "so that if you hit a wrong note you're going to hear it for a long, long time."

With his familiar conventional dulcimer Jim has no such problems. He tunes up his latest model and demonstrates it with the old tune "Arkansas Traveller." He plays it two ways: an uptempo version with fat, almost Dixieland-style chording that recalls his days on the tenor banjo; and a more traditional rendition. The man and his instrument work well together.

Jim built his first dulcimer some ten or twelve years ago. He did not play at the time—"In fact I hadn't even really seen that many of 'em. I made the first one, took it down to where I worked—I was really proud of it, gonna show it off. . . . I only had it for three days and a guy bought it just like that and I had two or three orders before I left the office. I've been makin' 'em regular ever since.

"We're makin' a pretty good dulcimer—I've tried to get it refined. Now the dulcimer has a built-in weakness, structurally it's just not that great for sound, as you can see. People who made traditional dulcimers didn't worry about volume, nor resonance either, for that matter. They wanted something that would fill a one room cabin.

"Now I'm not interested in a crude non-playable instrument—I want something that resonates and rings and speaks. The action's got to be just right. I use good spruce, good hardwoods for the back and sides."

"What do you like most about making instruments?" I ask Jim.

"I didn't say I enjoyed making instruments," Jim dissolves into laughter, "did I? I couldn't really say I enjoy it, actually, it's a challenge, and I don't necessarily—"

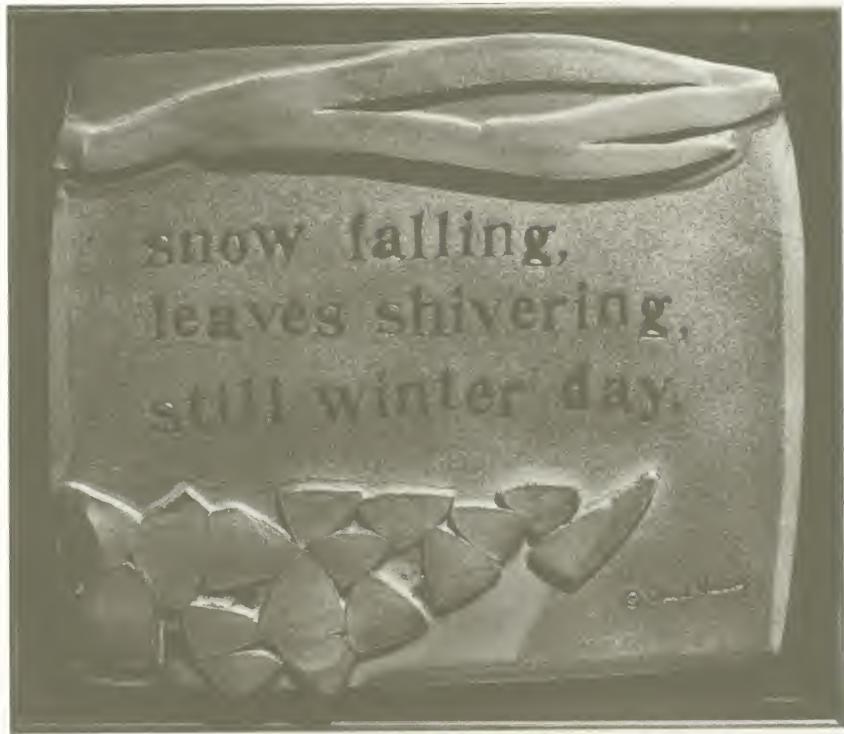
"—Well, why do you it then, let me ask you that?"

"Who knows? I love instruments. I, I love music, and I like crafts. I don't like all the steps I have to go through to get to the end. Some things I detest. Y'know, the menial, boring things like fitting pieces, but these are necessary steps so I've learned to discipline myself enough to get through those menial steps and on to where I want to go. I don't always enjoy those intermediate steps, but I've learned that it pays dividends to take your time and struggle through those things and do 'em as best you can. Then when you get to that last step where you're really excited it's *there* for you—you don't have to set down and weep about, y'know, why didn't I do this that and the other thing.



*Jim on his hammer dulcimer.*

"I like to get to that final step where I can put the strings on it and listen to it ring. That's what I really love."



*Pottery  
ceramic plaque,  
1975,  
21 1/2" x 17 1/2",  
stoneware, mixed stoneware and porcelain.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$250)*

*Photo by James Hemenway.*

**JAMES F. HEMENWAY (1941- ) /POTTER/TEACHER**

i watched as the  
moon went down,  
strange,  
seeing the world  
so so dark  
just before dawn



Pottery,  
ceramic plaque,  
1975,  
20 1/2" x 17 1/2",  
stoneware, mixed stoneware and porcelain.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$250)

Photo by James Hemenway.

"Call me Seamus. Shay-mus: S-e-a-m-u-s."

"My friends used to call me a professional Irishman because I really like Irish culture," Seamus says.

"A funny thing about living in these hills is the music. I can play some music from around here and then put on an Irish record one minute later and you won't believe your ears. It's the



Oliver Edwards Road  
Jonesboro, Tennessee 37659

*Photo by Michael Burnette.*

same thing. And then there's Bluegrass—well, not Bluegrass . . . music from the Shenandoah Valley, where they've taken a tune like "Foggy Foggy Dew" and changed it all around. The music's different but the words are just the same."

"About my poetry, like 'Snow falling, leaves shivering, still winter day'—I just thunk (sic) that up one day driving to work. Looking at the weather, things around me. And the same thing with, uh, 'Frost lingers in the shadows, as if it was hiding from the sun.' It was forty degrees out, but it was cold in the shadows, and I just thought it up."

"I've *tried* to write poems and it just doesn't work for me. I just have to wait for them. They'll come in clusters, sometimes three or four in a day."

"I started playing with clay before I started playing with words. I can remember thinking of poems years ago when I was going to San Diego State, but never bothering to write them down. There's a lot of them that are lost . . . I remember driving by San Miguel Mountain and thinking *something* about spring, but I don't remember what. Ten years ago, one of my professors out there suggested that I put the words and the clay together.

"That's pretty much what it's been ever since. Round pots are, uh, round pots. They're okay but I'm not really big on them."

All is interrupted when young Erin and Derek Hemenway bring their dispute through the screen door to father Seamus for mediation. Earlier, Derek complained that Erin was going to hit him with a board. Now, under Seamus' patient probing, it comes out that Erin's threat was prompted by Derek smacking *her* with the weapon first.

"You left out a very important part when you came in here before," Seamus calmly tells him. "Sometimes, not saying something is the same as lying." While Seamus speaks on to

*(continued on back)*

**JAMES F. HEMENWAY (1941- ) /POTTER/TEACHER**

drive the point home, Derek stands still but his eyes reveal that his mind is already back outside waiting for his body.

When the lesson is over, Derek bolts for the door, bursting oblivious past the plaque on the porch which reads:

I was asked  
the other day  
what are you going to  
be when you grow up?  
I replied,  
a garrulous old man.



(continued on back)

Pottery,  
Pot with Leaves and Acorns,  
1975,  
height: 10",  
handbuilt colored porcelain; salt glazed.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$175)

JANE PEISER (1932- )/CERAMIST

## SHAVINGS



It is easier to slice a *marini* than to describe it.

The word belongs to the glassblower's vocabulary—Jane's husband Mark is a glassblower, and the idea first struck her while watching him work.

In Jane's work, the *marini* is a clay loaf or cylinder made so that the design seen on the end runs uniformly through the whole construction. So, what looks like the pupil of an eyeball on the face of a *marini* is actually the end of a long thin coil of clay, for instance. In building *marinis*, Jane thinks *deep*.

Though each slice of the *marini* is truly a handbuilt piece of clay, each slice does not have to be built by itself. The slices are versatile: they can be rolled out, stretched or compressed to fit the different spaces of different pots. Because the *marini* stays good as long as the clay remains moist, each *marini* is useful over a long stretch of time.

Jane's own idea, the clay *marini* represents a unique way of realizing efficient production without sacrificing one whit of the handbuilt quality that clay demands and deserves.

Here, after slicing and rolling out the *marini*, Jane places it in a plaster mold and begins to build a pot around it.



How did Jane Peiser evolve her very personal way of working with clay?

"I didn't evolve that," she answers. "I've had that from the very first pot, because I'm self-taught. There was never any question of what it would look like. I just started. In fact I still have my first pot," Jane says as she brings it from a shelf.

There is no doubt who made this pot—the same sort of whimsical figures which run through all of Jane's work are here to be seen in the clay beginning.



*"Frankly, I hate talking about this baloney. Making pots—that's the essential thing."*

Penland, North Carolina 28765

At one time a painter, Jane found painting "too serious." Then, during a mosaic period in which "I must've tiled a square mile," Jane bought a kiln to make her own tiles because "I wanted to make figures and I was tired of square or hexagonal eyes."

With the requisite materials at hand, Jane also began making pots. She never stopped. "I was shy of clay at first," she recalls, "because I knew that I liked it and I knew that I'd get hooked."

"The idea of making a living like this—I didn't really evolve that either. That was the reason I was doing everything . . . looking for something I could make a living at that I liked well enough to do for most of each day," I didn't just one day realize 'gee, I like this well enough to do it for a living.' "

Today Jane still likes clay well enough to spend most of the day with it. And she *does* make a living. "I can't make as much pottery as people want," she remarks, "not friends—people on the phone." I feel bad about that and I don't know if I should."

Relative success poses certain questions.

"The funny thing," Jane observes, "is that without doing work any better than I'm doing now, I could manipulate myself into being a nationally-known potter, just by doing certain things. Like fifty workshops a year.

"I can't do fifty workshops a year, because I can't do fifty *good* workshops a year. I can only be really creative and fresh and caring for about three."

"Frankly, I hate talking about this baloney. Making pots—that's the essential thing."

As if to relieve the philosophical humidity, two friends of Jane's breeze into the studio bearing a bonanza of fresh strawberries. One of them sees a new pot and just has to have it. Over the juicy red globes of fruit the two women strike a bargain: babysitting Jane's pre-school daughter for the sought-after piece.

"I really like it when things are that way," Jane remarks to

*(continued on back)*

**JANE PEISER (1932- )/CERAMIST**

her assistant Jill after the visitors leave. “Each of us was able to give the other something that we wanted.”

Jane’s feelings about “success” in the art world and her unequivocal joy in this simple exchange stand in striking contrast. Success is something that can happen to you when you’re very good at what you do, and just a little canny. *Appreciation*, on the other hand, is what Jane strives to be worthy of.

“I would like the people who buy a pot of mine,” Jane says, “to feel that it is one of their precious possessions. I have a very few things—not things I’ve made, just things I own—that I feel that way about. And I would like the people who have my pieces to feel that way about them.”

They do.



Stone sculpture,  
Old Chief,  
1974  
height: 11",  
North Carolina red pipestone.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of Thomas Underwood)

JOHN J. WILNOTY (1940- )/SCULPTOR/CARVER

# SHAVINGS



"I carve because this is the talent God gave me," John Wilnoky has said, "and I was lucky. I found it. When I was twenty years old there was no way for me to make a living for my family because I had sleeping spells where I just passed out any old time. Pretty soon, after I did my praying about finding a way to make a living, I picked up some little pieces of pipe rock and carved faces on them. I took them to friends that sold crafts here in Cherokee. They bought the little pieces and sold them real soon. . . ."

One of the first to see John's early work was Tom Underwood, and he saw something very special in it. He bought the work for his Medicine Man Craft Shop and began exposing John to Indian stonework in books and museums.

"Develop your own style," he told John from the start. "Never copy anybody, and never repeat yourself."

Fifteen years later, John's work is worth good money, and Tom has a lot of John's work.

Yet this isn't what excites Tom Underwood.

"Look at the perfection of the work," Tom says as he cradles a small, exquisitely detailed piece. "Look at the perfection, he

repeats on showing each new item, not as one hawking wares, but from the heart.

Saving the grandest for last, Tom shows the "Eagle Dancer," a cherry-wood sculpture that is perhaps John's most celebrated work.

"John said when he started this thing that he was going to carve a man with the muscles right in the grain of the wood. I think you'll agree that he did that."

The figure is a tour-de-force. Each striation of the wood defines the dancer's joints and muscles; not here and there, not to novel effect, but so clearly, powerfully and completely that it is as though the sculptor, having envisioned this piece, created through force of will the wood to make it.

Tom runs his finger down the upraised wing.

"You know," Tom reveals, "John's main collector is a psychic, and she feels that John has lived many times before. I can attest to that. It's just as though he'd found himself when he started carving, as though it was in him, waiting to come out. Nobody taught him a *thing*."

"John's not like a lot of other people," Tom observes. He doesn't promote himself. He doesn't care about being famous.

"He stays hid so much of the time. People always want to talk to him, to take up his time, especially in the summer. He loves to talk, but he knows that if he doesn't get something done, he doesn't make a living.

"He does a lot of his work in a little old truck. He's probably sitting somewhere off beside the road right now."

It's not easy for John Wilnoty to get work done. Though guarded with strangers, John is at bottom a vastly sociable man, and here in Cherokee there are always people eager to hang out with a great Indian artist.

John's solution is typically American: wheels.

He travels around in a little Ford van fitted out with a television between the front seats, a Coleman heater, drawers of carving tools, racks of guns, and a collection of sunglasses hanging from the left-hand visor.

Sometimes John parks in one of his regular roadside spots. That makes him accessible—the truck is known on sight around here and John's figure is instantly distinguished by a trooper-style hat, a holstered revolver and a six-pointed hand-tooled silver star that he made himself.

When John wants to be alone he drives deep into the hills.

With guidance from Tom Underwood (see above) I find John in a winter drizzle, parked high beside the town's great



Cherokee, North Carolina 28719

amphitheatre. Children jump out of the truck, rake the evergreens with B-B broadsides, and jump back into its warmth. John sits behind the wheel and does not acknowledge my approach until I am fogging the window.

Though Tom has told him I am coming, John betrays neither recognition nor surprise. I stand outside the truck for what seems like a long time, patiently explaining who I am and what I want while my feet freeze. It is a beautiful experience.

Beautiful, because John knows who he is. He has no need to disturb himself just because a passing stranger might write something nice about him. "I'm the only Indian who's gotten famous and hasn't changed," he says.

He studies me as he might study a rock to see if it is worth carving.

I pass.

It's Saturday cartoon-time inside. His children watch between their air-gun escapades, but John's attention is steady, his running comments without contempt. Right now he is working rawhide into strips with a knife, but the pulls out his homemade stonework tools when I ask about them.

The tools say a great deal about John. Each tool is crafted with cunning precision to further a larger vision. One—a tiny threadcutting tap with two of three threadrows ground smooth—yields the mystery of the impossibly fine parallel lines which texture John's stonework: he cuts them with the case-hardened teeth of this tool.

John does much of his work with a diamond grinding-wheel. When he found it in the trunk of a government car it was much too big. "I wore out a lot of chisels on that dadjim thing before I got a hunk busted off," he recalls. "I spent the next three days just *bumping* that chunk into the wheel until I got it turned down to the size I needed."

I hand back the tools. They look like they belong to someone

*(continued on back)*

**JOHN J. WILNOTY (1940- )/SCULPTOR/CARVER**

who knows what he's doing, I remark.



(Not for Sale—Courtesy of Thomas Underwood)

"Well," John says at length, "I've always said anybody can carve who wants to carve. Anybody can, if they *want to bad enough.*"

A long pause.

"Course, there's no telling what the dadgim thing'll look like."

Then the cartoons are over and wrestling comes on.

John follows each bout avidly, offering endless background information about each wrestler: his strengths and weaknesses, his character, his ring history and record against today's opponent. Each wrestler reminds him of other wrestlers and soon the van fills with the phantom presence of wrestlers not on the screen.

"There was old-time Indians that could doctor a man for wrestling," John says soberly. "A man like that, nobody couldn't ride that man 'til he died.

"There was a man like that around here. Even him being an old man, he'd take on three or four men at a time. But one night he got beat. 'Boys, my time is up,' he said. The next day he was dead."

I want to get back to *art*, but that's not what's happening. What's Happening is up there on the tube.

"I used to wrestle when I was younger," John says quietly during a commercial. "Our only ring was the open air. I learned to save my strength and let my opponent tire himself out."

Thus warned, I rise to go.

"Maybe it'll be sunny tomorrow," John says. "Come to my house tomorrow and you can take your picture of me then."

The next day I set out, driving the long road from Cullowhee. John is not home.

Early the next week I find John by the roadside watching an afternoon movie on TV. Just let him finish the movie, he says, and he'll be up at the theatre where I can take his picture. At the appointed time I drive up to our rendezvous, prepared to greet empty asphalt.

But John is there and he hops out of his truck and says "where do you want me." Some caprice or meditation has changed John. Perhaps he has Tired Me Out.

I take the picture you see here. This man is not easily given to smile, but do not be fooled.

Behind John's formidable gaze is a warmth that can carve fire from the ice of stone.



Traditional Indian pottery. *Wedding Pitcher*, height: 9", traditional shape with friendship or basket decoration; *Bowl* height 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", traditional shape with original decoration; *Pot with Lid*, height 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", traditional shape with contemporary lid and decorated with friendship and original design patterns. (Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artists)

**JOHN HENRY & LOUISE BIGMEAT MANEY**  
**(1931- ) (1932- ) / TRADITIONAL INDIAN POTTERS**

# SHAVINGS



Bigmeat Pottery draws from and adds to Cherokee tradition.

Much of it, learned from Louise's mother and grandmother, is as it has been beyond memory. Even when Louise creates her own designs, she looks to her native culture. Her "alphabet bowls" bear the graphic stamp of the tribal tongue. Her "Road to Soco" design reworks a traditional weaving pattern in clay. *That* was tricky, Louise explains, because she had to take a two-dimensional rectangular design and adapt it to a tapering three-dimensional surface.

The Maneys fire their pottery in the traditional way, that is, right *in* a wood fire. They use an oil drum; sealing smouldering pine for an all-black finish; and burning hardwood with the lid off to gain a finish which runs from the white of the clay body through reds to black. Louise's mother used to fire her pottery in

the family cookstove, six pieces at a time. "I'm looking for one of those stoves now," says Louise, "so I can show my visitors how it's done."

This is unglazed low-fire pottery, non-waterproof and somewhat fragile. In daily use this pottery becomes waterproof as heat drives food into the vessel's pores, but pottery buyers of today aren't used to waiting—they expect instant service.

Recently the Maneys were awarded a grant to "improve" their pottery.

During a two week stay at the Art Institute of the American Indian, none of the faculty could see a way to better the Bigmeat's forms. So the Maneys spent the time experimenting with different high-fire glazes applied to their own clay; striving to combine the appearance of the old-time finish with the practicality of modern ware. "That's the only way we could see to make it better," remarks Louise.

Back at home with the new electric kiln, John and Louise are still experimenting, but they are confident.

Maxim holds that nothing is perfect. Some things, though, are as good as they can be.

These things are a joy to behold.

"I've been doing pottery since I was a little girl. My mother and grandmother did it. We all had to help, it was sort of a family affair," Louise Maney says.

"In my teens then I quit, I didn't have to do pottery. I always wanted to come back but I was kind of lazy. I liked to work with it but I didn't like to get out and dig my own clay. Then I found out where you could buy it.

"I always had the desire to make things."



Cherokee, North Carolina 28719

**JOHN HENRY & LOUISE BIGMEAT MANEY  
(1931- ) (1932- ) /TRADITIONAL INDIAN POTTERS**



By the time Louise came back to pottery she was married. Her husband John Henry followed the masonry trade and the work got slow in the winter months. Pottery helped supplement their income—but not much. "You couldn't get nothing when we started," Louise remembers. "I'd work hard all week and make ten dollars, fifteen-twenty years ago."

Louise learned to use their first wheel. John Henry was her assistant then doing odd jobs and finishing work. Somewhere along the line the clay hooked him and now *he* does the throwing, which Louise decorates with award-winning skill. "It took me a year just to learn how to really center the clay properly," John reports.

Today the Bigmeats have their own studio with two electric wheels and a shiny new electric kiln. Between John's hospital maintenance job and Louise's teaching in the art-room at the elementary school, they can be more leisurely about their

*(continued on back)*

pottery than they were in leaner times. Tonight is a good example—Louise builds a face on a pot as she talks, but John turns off the wheel and unties his apron when the Pro Bowl comes on TV.

Somewhere in the third quarter, Louise's brother walks in.

"Louise was just sitting here grumbling about how you used to have to go dig clay," John tells him.

"He was the baby—he didn't have to dig clay," Louise retorts. That's why he doesn't know how to make pottery. He didn't have to."

Louise puts down her work and recalls those years.

"Over there where the Macedonian Church used to be—behind Santa-Land—we'd take an old steer and a sled. My older brothers and my mother, we'd go and we'd stay all day. I was the smallest one—I was the one who had to crawl back in that hole and dig that clay out, 'cause I could get to it. It'd take us about all day to dig three sledfulls. Then it took us about three weeks to clean it.

"We'd have to lay it out, let it dry, and then beat it into

powder and put it into big old cans. And every day we'd have to pour that water off 'cause the trash would all come to the top, and put clean water in it. After about three or four days we'd work it up by hand, take out the rocks and sticks and all. Then we had an old meatgrinder, what they grind hamburger with, and we'd put it in there and grind it up. Then we'd work it up again.

"Then it'd be ready . . . well, we'd have to let it sit for some reason or another. Aging, they call it.

"My mother'd say 'it's not ready yet, we can't make anything.' 'Cause it'd crack all up if you tried to use it then. We lived on Wright's Creek and there a big old maple tree there and we'd all sit under that tree and make pots. I guess when John Henry was courtin' me I was sittin' under that tree."

They both laugh.

"He used to walk on by like he was something. I don't think he ever thought he'd be married to me, and making pottery."



*Basketry,*  
1976,  
height: 12", diameter: 12",  
white oak.

*(Not for Sale—Courtesy of Phil Edgerton)*

**KARL BELCHER (1905- ) / BASKETMAKER**

A railroad man for fifty years, Karl Belcher retired on a pension from the car-building shops of a major road. In his new found leisure, Karl took up basketmaking "mostly as a hobby."



*Riving a splint.*

Route 6, Box 568

Princeton, West Virginia 24740

"When I first went to making baskets I never had no idee in the world of ever selling a basket," he confesses. "Well, people found out about it . . . to be plum plain about it we were up in a craft-shop in Bluefield one day and there was some baskets there somebody'd made out of North Carolina. My wife said to the lady there 'my husband's making baskets.'

"Oh," she said, "where's he at? We got to pay him!"

"She wouldn't take no. She said the man who made 'em for her was dead and she couldn't get no baskets. Well, I went to makin' baskets for her and then she got me on television on this little program . . ."

Soon Karl was appearing on the airwaves, demonstrating his craft at fairs, and teaching classes.

"You might say I'm over-advertised," Karl concludes. "Business is much bigger than what I can handle."

Despite the demand, Karl has not gone big-business. He keeps his prices low and meets his mounting pile of orders with calm industry. That's what makes Karl so special. Others might try for a killing here. Karl just sees a great need for his gift, and gives it.

"You might say I inherited it in a certain way," says Karl of his skill. "It's a slight remembrance from my grandfather and my great-uncles. They used to work chair-bottoms and so. I had bottomed chairs before—I do some of that there yet, so I just set in and did a lot of experimenting when I first went to making baskets."

From teaching himself, Karl turned to teaching others. His summer class at Ferrum College remains vivid in the memory of those who attended. "Why, those women over there were turning out baskets as good or better than mine the second day," Karl reports with delight.

Karl brings more to these classes than clear instruction. He brings carloads of white oak splints that he makes himself. It is Karl's way to gather all his own materials, combing the countryside near his home for the trees that he knows will rive

*(continued on back)*

**KARL BELCHER (1905- ) / BASKETMAKER**

well. The quest gets harder with time. As Karl gets less spry, he has to travel further afield because the good nearby trees get used up. Still, on the best of days Karl likes this part of the process as well as any.

Karl keeps what he gathers in a pile by the root-cellar and rives it into splints when the weather is pretty.

Apple trees over hang this shaving-strewn patch of ground. Karl traces a welt in the bark of one tree. This is where he has grafted on a limb, he explains; then he disappears into the root-cellar and returns proudly bearing the fruit of his ministration. It is sweet and crisp.

The actual basket-making takes place in Karl's basement workshop. There, splints waiting to be worked soak in buckets. Finished baskets hang from the ceiling. Every basket in sight—indeed every basket that will be made from the loose splints—is spoken for. "I can't ever get caught up," Karl says.

On the seat of a homemade device, Karl shows how he works the rough splints smooth with a knife. The contraption looks like

a cross between a hobby-horse and an exercycle but it works flawlessly. Pressure on a foot-pedal clamps the work firmly in place; Karl's hands are both free.

Then Karl shows his baskets. They are wonderful. One cannot help but marvel at how what-had-once-been-a-tree can now contain space in this dancing way.

At the junction of basket and handle Karl weaves a knot more ornate and yet stronger than the traditional "X". These baskets are more than pretty—there is something of the railroad car-builder in them. Each splint is clean and even; together they form a vessel with integrity. Here is art as sturdy and useful as an oak box-car.

"People say I don't charge enough for my baskets," Karl says in parting. "Maybe not. But I have an income from the railroad, and why, if I can help humanity in some way, if I can make someone smile, that's all I ask.

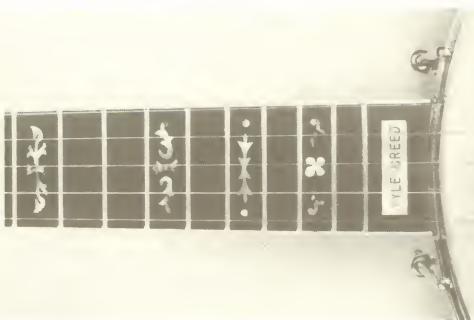
"I guess I've given away as many as I've sold."



*Musical instrument,  
banjo,  
1975,  
length: 36", depth: 2 1/2", diameter: 11",  
curly maple, abalone pearl inlay, gold-plated hardware, skin head.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$700 with case)*

KYLE CREED (1912- )/BANJO-MAKER

## SHAVINGS



Kyle reports that when he came back to banjo-making in 1960, he was already a "first-class carpenter," but since then he has learned some tricks particular to banjo-making.

"Like I know all my measurements by heart now. I make my own patterns, I roll my own hoops up—see here's one rolled up ready to put together—I laminate 'em myself. And I'll tell you something else if you want an old-timey sounding banjo—don't make the hoops too thick. A lot of commercial banjos today they use a hoop about three-quarters thick. It makes a good stout hoop but if you don't watch out you're gonna get away from your good plunky sound. This one here I made is three-eighths."

Even as he strives for his prized old-time "plunky" tone, Kyle is not averse to modern construction methods.

The way Kyle sets his frets, for instance, is unique. By standard practice the frets are driven into tight-fitting slots in the fingerboard. This works fine—little barbs on each fret dig

securely into the wood. But these same barbs play hob when it comes time to re-fret the instrument, often ripping up splinters as the artisan gingerly struggles to free each fret from its fiber bed.

Kyle cuts his slots big enough to drop the frets into.

"I can just slip these fret-wires in when I get ready," he says by way of demonstration on a neck-in-progress. "Then I just take me a hypodermic needle full of this aluminum plastic and squirt it into the slots. Lead them frets in. They'll stay put 'til you want to take 'em out but they won't rip up the fingerboard when it's time to re-fret.

"... And they didn't reinforce their necks in the old days and a lot of 'em bellied in a little bit," Kyle observes. "I put steel in my necks. They won't never get crooked."

"See, that's a 3/16" by 1/2" key steel under there and it comes to right *there* (pointing along the fingerboard). It's routed out just to fit. I bed the steel in liquid solder and wood-dough, just like it grew in there."

—You really have a concern for the quality of your instruments.

"Yeah, I like 'em to stay with me. I don't believe in building nothing I'd be ashamed to own."



In his warm, modest home hard alongside the highway, Kyle Creed handbuilds banjos, horse-trades fiddles, and records



*Kyle injects liquid aluminum into the fretboard:  
"I like my banjos to stay with me."*

Route 3  
Galax, Virginia 24333

traditional stringband music for an avid mail-order audience. Kyle has been at music-making now in one way or another for the best part of his life.

"I wanted me a banjo and didn't have no money," Kyle recollects. "Back in the thirties you know, wasn't no money around."

"Right over there it sits," says Kyle, pointing to an instrument hanging high on the shop wall, "first one ever I made. I was about sixteen. I didn't have nothing but a drawknife and a hatchet and a pocket-knife and a brace-and-bit to work with. I never seen one built, but I'd seen banjos—I know'd what they oughta look like."

"It came out good . . . sounded awful good. I split the wood out of poplar, and ordered the metal parts from Sears and Roebuck. Didn't have but twelve brackets (the metal parts which tension the skin head) on it," Kyle laughs.

Learned my first tune on that job right there. Made two—one for a neighbor boy. I sold it for a couple dollars I guess."

A few years later while working up in Winchester, Virginia, Kyle stayed with his uncle, "a real good banjo-picker." He made himself a walnut banjo to replace the poplar model left back home. This third banjo was Kyle's last for many years.

In 1960 Kyle returned to Galax after roving years of construction work.

"When we moved back up here Fred Cockerham, an old boy I used to play with, had cataracts on his eyes and was just about blind, couldn't do nothing. He could play a banjo but he didn't have a banjo so I made *him* one. Fretless. Made it to give to him so he'd have something to do. He still has it. And then people began saying 'Kyle, how about making me one?' Well pretty soon I was getting orders more than I could make. So, I make about twenty a year now."

—What, in your opinion, is the secret of a quality banjo?  
"Well, that depends on what you call a quality banjo. I

*(continued on back)*

**KYLE CREED (1912- )/BANJO-MAKER**

concentrate on old-time banjos, old-time sounding. I make a few bluegrass banjos, about one out of every ten or fifteen. I know what *they* want—they want a sharp snappy sound you know. I use a Gibson scale which is 26 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Now they used to make a 27" scale, a lot of them old banjos got a 27" scale. But their bridge sets so far back on the head that I, I don't like the *sound* of 'em. On a fretless banjo you can put your bridge anywhere you want it because there's no frets, so you don't have to note at no certain place. Back in the days when I was growing up most of 'em was fretless banjos that the fellers would play and they kept their bridge just about at the center or a half-an-inch behind the center. It gives you a meller sound and a plunky sound which you're looking for in a old-time banjo.

"The way I make my necks, I still use that same (Gibson) scale but I make my necks long enough to bring that bridge up there where I want it. That's where I get my good plunky sound."

—You seem to like that "plunky" sound.

"Well, everybody does in an old-time banjo. Yeah, they want that plunky sound. And it's still got a lot of power (pronounced

"paar") like that one I was playing a minute ago."

The talk turns back to Kyle's first banjo.

"I killed a cat to make the head for the thing, y'know. My Grandmother had an old cat she said I could have—she knew what I wanted it for—and I skinned the cat and took the hair off with wood ashes."

—Did you ever play for your Grandmother to make her miss the cat a little less?

"Ha ha. I was staying with them then. I lived with them for one year before I got married—helped my Granddaddy farm. Right there is where I learned to pick a banjo.

"But she was kinda funny about that. She didn't like me to play when it was raining out. Afraid, I guess. And she wouldn't let me pick on Sunday, not where she'd hear me. Naw sir. I'd slip it out, y'know, go down to the back-house somewhere. She didn't think you oughta make music on Sunday.

—How did you feel about it?

"I thought you oughta play any time you could."

*Pottery,  
glazed stoneware casserole dish,  
1975,  
height: 6 1/2" with lid, diameter: 10 1/2".  
(Opening Bid Price—\$25)*



LEE DAVIS (1942- )/POTTER

## SHAVINGS



The two clay pieces here might represent the nether ends of Lee Davis' clay continuum.

The casserole is a pleasant object—it expresses human ability as it holds our food. The “closed form,” on the other hand, is most useful to our eyes/fingertips/and imaginations. Though it contains nothing, it suggests much. Lee speaks of the area with the spiky little forms as “a clay garden where someone an inch or two tall could dance.”

“Costumes and stage design influence my work,” Lee comments as he displays the latter pot. “The space of stage design. I like a lot of space on the inside because that’s what a pot is about—negative space—but I don’t stop there. I like to make textures that reach out or engulf.”

This *playfulness* communicates itself to children.

“I give demonstrations to children in grammar school,” Lee says, “and I ask them to imagine having a job where you play with mud all day.”

“When I show them the wheel they say ‘Mr. Davis, throw a cow. Throw a *train* Mr. Davis! ’ ”



*Pottery,  
Closed Form,  
1972,  
height: 11", diameter: 9 1/2",  
stoneware and porcelain.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$125)*

A "better teacher than potter," Lee Davis has ample opportunity to work from his strength here at Campbell Folk School. Today, Lee is building a large, modern gas kiln for his upcoming classes. On a break from stacking firebrick, he speaks of a different kind of kiln—the "groundhog kiln."

After aborted efforts at the University of Kansas, Lee wants



Brasstown, North Carolina 28902

to build a groundhog kiln here.

"In Kansas," he laughs, "there was no wood to burn. Of course I finally got a kiln built, and fired it with scrap lumber, but I was trying to build a groundhog kiln without a hillside.

"This is a perfect spot for one," Lee says as he points out the studio window, "see that slight incline?" And once they start cutting lumber again they'll be plenty of slabwood to fire with. You can get cone ten with softwood."

Made out of red brick or homemade firebrick, buried in the earth for insulation and consisting of little more than a firebox and a single-shelf oven, a groundhog kiln is "the cheapest kiln you can build. The chimney is only eight feet instead of fifteen because the whole thing is like a chimney lying down. That's why they call it a 'groundhog kiln,'" Lee explains, "you have to crawl back in there to load it. It's easiest with three people; one person hands the clay to someone in the firebox, who hands it to the person in the kiln-chamber.

"Compared to the art and drama of firing a groundhog kiln," asserts Lee, "turning on a gas kiln is so impersonal. You can't put cones in that groundhog to tell you how hot it is because the wood ashes get on the cones and they either won't bend or they'll collapse at any given temperature. You have to be able to associate the degree with the *intensity of flame*, and you learn it by using drop tiles . . . little holes in the kiln, and little glazed clay rings at the end of iron rods. Well, you pull out the rings, and if they're melted then it's ready, and if they're not you just stick 'em back in. Very simple, but it's foolproof, y'know, and then pretty soon you're doin' it by noticing that the fire is cherry-red, or yellow, or white-hot.

"I hope to have a firing during a two-week workshop—it would add so much intensity to the class. With the other kind (of kiln) you're essentially taking the student's work away from them for a few days and you hand it back to them and they've *done* nothing, whereas with the groundhog kiln they're involved

*(continued on back)*

**LEE DAVIS (1942- )/POTTER**

to the point where they're even gathering the wood to make it go.

"At night especially it's a party. You cook food and sing songs and actually *see* the flames lapping on your pots. It's very hot and it's hard work and by morning you're just totally exhausted. And then you've got to wait two days before you can open it. That's hard. You don't know whether it's gonna be Christmas Day or a total disaster.

"I know I'll build one here," Lee says, "it's just a matter of time."

Lee likes his tools to let him be involved. He uses a motor-assist on his wheel "when a pot is so big that I'd be too tired from kicking to *make* the thing," but kicks when he can. "When you kick a wheel your whole body is being used in making pottery," he says.

"I saw a picture once of Marguerite Wildinghane—a very famous potter who came from the Bauhaus and is now about eighty. It's a photograph of her on the wheel and I don't know *what* her hands are doing because I can't get my eyes from the photograph off of her feet. She's *dancing* on the wheel. The wheel

is not turning—she's just stopped it and she has on these woven Mexican sandals and she's *on point*, she's really a ballet dancer on point."

Two students from Lee's days as a university professor stand out in his memory. One, who deeply wished to be a production potter, showed very slow progress because "he had a sensitivity for what the clay wanted to do, a massive respect for the clay." The other was "a great, hulking" grad-school bound potter, who, when the clay didn't want to do something, "just muscled it around until it would," Lee recalls. "His pots were quite impressive in scale and design, *very impressive*, but just as cold and dead as anything you've ever seen.

"If I gave him a lower grade than the other fellow it would just cause a massive turmoil from the students on to the department heads. And I couldn't understand that because I kept thinking, now these are the people who should understand that a lot of it is *integrity to the media* as much as anything else."

The "integrity to the media" for which Lee Davis strives goes far beyond the realm of clay alone.

Stone sculpture,  
*Capture of the Innocent*  
(photographed in progress),  
1976,  
height: 5 3/4",  
black pipestone.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$600)



LLOYD CARL OWLE (1943- )/CARVER/SCULPTOR

One-quarter Cherokee by blood, Lloyd Carl Owle is enrolled as a full member of the Cherokee tribe. A man with a deep and abiding interest in Native American culture, Carl expresses this concern through artwork one authority has called "sculptural



Box 331  
Cherokee, North Carolina 28719

carving with a folk art influence."

In November of 1974 Carl had his first one-man show, which brought together sixteen of his distinctive, smooth-finish pieces depicting Indian life, legend, and history. Carl offered his guiding thoughts on this occasion:

"Art is a way of communication, a language of the races, no matter what their beliefs or disagreements. Through art, mankind leaves his mark on time. During all the confusion, frustration, and unrest, somewhere along the line it's good to stop, take a deep breath, and look at a great piece of art, a painting, or a sculpture. It helps me decide something. It gives me peace of mind, taking away fears."

"I like to create because it is a way of expressing what I see and believe. In this way I can share the beauty, the sadness, the love of living with others. I can communicate with the poorest people on earth and bring a smile to their faces."

"The Great Creator, or mysterious power who controls all matter and has the great plan of the miracle of life, sends messages through the works of art."

"Look around you sometime and see the art of mankind; also look past that and see the art of the Great Spirit. This will help you forget some of the conflicts or frustrations facing life and will help to heal your spirit as you reach out into something creative yourself."

The day of our visit Carl had no time for conversation. An active member of the Save The Children Federation, Carl works with a growing arts and crafts program to foster skills among the children and keep Native American culture alive.

Bound for a Federation workshop in Phoenix, Arizona, Carl offered his sculpture—still in progress—and penned a quick entry into a spiral notebook.

*(continued on back)*

**LLOYD CARL OWLE (1943- )/CARVER/SCULPTOR**

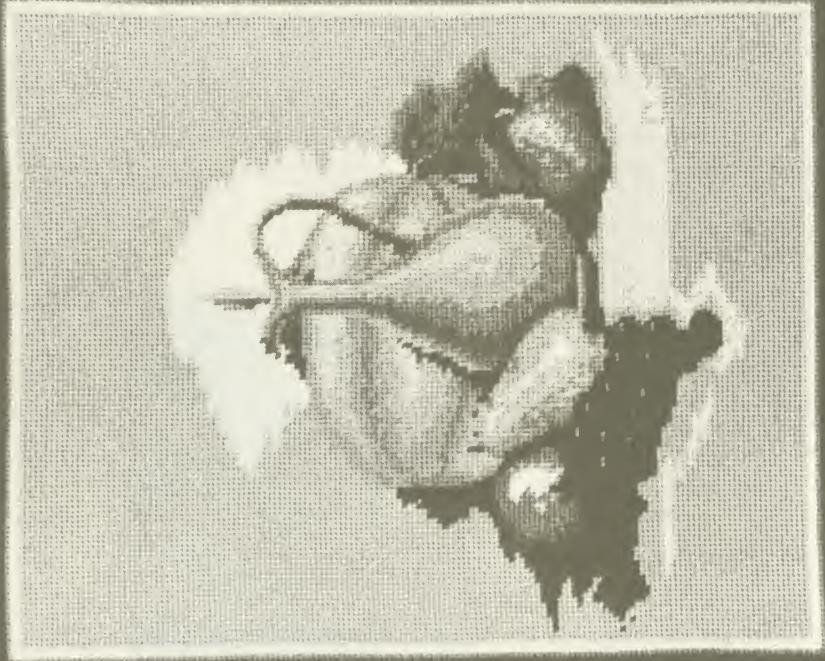
"I have lived on the Reservation all my life," Carl wrote, "and have always been interested in doing things creatively in stone, wood, etc. It's kind of like inventing something with each carving I do.

"As a boy because of my fair complexion my family and other members of the tribe began calling me "The White Owl" so this became my Indian name or trademark in arts and crafts.

"Lately I have worked mostly in stone and hope to do much more. I can't pinpoint exactly when or where I became interested in stone carving. Some of my kinfolks such as Mose Owl used to do stonework, mostly pipes.

"It is a gift to have the talent of being able to do this work and I am thankful that I can."

Carl shook my hand and dashed off to catch the plane.



Needlepoint,  
Still Life (original design),  
1972,  
21" x 17 1/2",  
penelope yarn and wool tapestry yarn.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artist)

MARTHA CULP (1915- )/NEEDLEWORKER

Martha Culp started doing needlework when she was "four or five." "Oh yes," she says. My mother, my grandmother, my great-grandmother—whom I remember well as a small redhead woman who used to sit in a rocking chair and sew—they all did it. My grandmother and great-grandmother even used to spin and weave."

With this background it's not surprising that Martha does needlepoint, sews quilt-tops, knits and crochets. "People are born with different urges," Martha observes, "and all my sense is in my hands."

More unusual are the stories behind the things that Martha makes. These are the textile testaments of a generous soul.



Shellbridge, East 11th Avenue  
Johnson City, Tennessee 37601

The "log-cabin" quilt-top in the picture, for instance, is the sort of present that some mountain women give their sons when they come of marrying age—but this quilt is not for any blood son of Martha Culp's. It's for Gerald, a young man who lived with the Culps for two and a half years.

"Gerald was my son's best friend when we lived in Montevallo, Alabama," Martha explains. "He was the youngest of five children, and really his mother's son, if you know what I mean. They were just *alike* . . . quiet, introverted people."

"The boy's mother died of cancer after a year of terrible illness, and Gerald just came part after that. His father was working two shifts to handle the expenses, so he wasn't home much, and Gerald just pushed the world away. He'd go to school every day but not talk to anyone—just look at his desk and not answer questions or take tests."

"We were about to move to Tennessee and the question of Gerald came up. Nothing had been said but it was recognized that we were very important to Gerald. We were his connection, his last link."

The Culps asked Gerald's father if the boy could come with them up to Tennessee. After long deliberation, the man put the question to Gerald just before the Culps were to leave.

Gerald never hesitated, and this quilt is the latest chapter in that story.

"We've taken a number of children in," Martha goes on. "In fact, that's how I got started in on needlepoint. We took in a little boy five years old who couldn't talk and we kept him for a year to teach him how."

The speechless child's father had been Martha's student when *he* was young, and now brought his son to Montevallo in hopes of enrolling him in the reknowned speech-therapy clinic there. But there was a two-year waiting list, and "two years is a long time in public school for a child who can't talk," Martha says. The Culps took in the child so that he could attend the speech center as an out-

(continued on back)

## MARTHA CULP (1915- )/NEEDLEWORKER

patient.

In the many hours that Martha spent at home that year with the child, she learned to do needlepoint.

Each item surrounding Martha is for someone. One shawl is for Martha's daughter (who together with Martha took in yet another needful youth for six months, saving him from reform school). Another crocheted piece is a "knee-warmer" for someone in an old-folks home. The big quilt-top behind Martha is that log-cabin quilt for Martha's special friend Gerald.

If Martha is a Good Samaritan, she is also a modest one.

"I don't like to just sit down and have nothing to do," she says simply. "It hurts my hands."



*Some of Martha's work.*



*Quilting,  
Bear's Paw Sampler,  
1976,  
18" x 18",  
cotton blend of brown, white and yellow prints.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$18)*

© 1980 by the Estate of Nova Lowe

NOVA LOWE (1898- )/QUILTER

# SHAVINGS



The frame that Nova uses is unusual. Four fabric straps attached to hooks in the ceiling suspend the frame and its cloth cargo at a comfortable height.

"I know these frames are supposed to be on stands," Nova says, "but I wouldn't *have* them. I hate the things. (The idea for this way) is just out of my own brains. I got to looking at those grooves in the frames and I got to thinking now why can't I just hang the things. Now you see if I want to quilt way on over *here* I can just swing my quilt. On those stands, you got to move your chair. I took the stands—they're settin' up yonder in that old chicken-house."

She laughs.

"I got 'em down in a big old can."

Nova Lowe describes how she started quilting.

"Necessity is one thing," she explains; when I was raising a family. But since I got through with *having* to do it, I always did want to make pretty quilts. The first quilts I quilted I was around fifteen years old. Sewed 'em on a sewing machine."

All of Nova's quilting was for her children until they were grown. After that, Nova "worked a few years in the textile business." Then, about ten years ago, she "just went to making pretty quilts."



*Mrs. Lowe and great-granddaughter:*

*"When I get one in the frames I'm as happy as I can be."*

Route 2, Box 191

Hayesville, North Carolina 28904

"I just learned it," Nova says, "by trial and error. I read quite a bit about it in books, y'know, instructions and one thing or another. But it's just natural with me, I reckon. It's a gift, I think."

"Of course I don't do quilting near as nice as some people. I have some neighbors who do *gorgeous* quilting—every stitch is just exactly alike."

"But mine's in demand anyway . . . that's all I go by."

Indeed it is. Every quilt Nova makes is sold before it's off the frame. Her work graces homes in Ohio, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, New York, California, Texas, Florida, and even Great Britain.

Lately, Nova averages about three quilts per month. In past years she has been even more productive. "But I've been the most dilitary (sic) this fall that I have been ever," she laments, "getting the inside of this house painted. I've got to get back in the groove. I'm getting behind."

"Well, I'll tell you, I don't have to quilt—I mean for money—but it comes in mighty handy."

"I tried to quilt for everybody—tried to get *everybody's* quilting done, and I couldn't do it. So I just quit. Went to work on my own. And besides I'd get tops in here that were pieced every which way—some of the seams would be turned that way here and this way there."

"I make my own tops now, yes. I won't quilt one for *anybody* anymore. Because they just don't piece 'em to my standards. And, if I charged 'em more than eight or ten dollars they thought I was robbin' 'em."

"One time a woman in Charlotte had a top all ready, and she sent to me wanting to know my price to quilt it. I gave 'em a price, and I thought it was so high she wouldn't consider it at all . . . I didn't want to do the work. Bless your life just as quick as she could get the material and send it to me here came everything but the needle and thimble. I had to do it."

*(continued on back)*

**NOVA LOWE (1898- )/QUILTER**

“Well, I did it for fifty dollars. It was worth *every* penny of it. I sent her the quilt . . . just in a little while here come another check; twenty-five dollars. Seventy-five dollars for quilting that quilt. And it was worth every penny of *that*.

“It ain’t no fun to sit here and gouge your fingers up. I’ve had mine gouged ‘til they’d be into the quick. But I do enjoy quiltin’ on my own quilts. But I don’t on anybody else’s.

“I’m always in the mood to quilt—I’m a quilting fanatic. I despise to piece ‘em. But I have to piece ‘em to quilt ‘em. When I get one in the frames I’m as happy as I can be.”



*Wrought iron,  
trivet and candleholder,  
circa 1930's,  
trivet, diameter: 6 1/2"; candleholder, height: 3",  
candleholder made from the top of an old 1936 Ford.  
(Opening Bid Price—Trivet, \$25; Candleholder, \$25)*

OSCAR CANTRELL (1901- )/BLACKSMITH

In the hallway of the John C. Campbell Folk School, Doris Ullman's forty year-old photograph of blacksmith Oscar Cantrell softly glows behind glass. An iron lamp from Oscar's forge graces the nearby table. Behind it, an iron candle stand echoes the angle of the iron bannister flowing up the stairs. These too are Oscar's work.

Decades later and a few hundred yards away, Oscar repairs the school's ailing power-planer.

His figure is yet as lean and able in life as its young likeness in the hallway.

"That man can do anything, and he does," says a long time friend. Oscar moves around the power-planer as if to bear this out; frowning at a sticky roller and dousing it with oil, running his thumb along the freshly ground blades, spinning the depth-adjustment wheel with two fingers and smiling.

"That old wheel took two hands to work when I started this morning. They run these machines 'til they give out before they take care of 'em," Oscar says.

The machine whirs into life and Oscar hefts a long timber onto the feed table. He eyeballs the wood and adjusts the machine. The snickering blades agree with his guess as the board feeds through and emerges smooth. The process is repeated again and again until Oscar is satisfied.

"I made those blades," Oscar says. "It took me fifteen hours to grind those blades down from another old set." He runs his fingers along the machined surfaces. "Made me a gauge out of vise-grips and a old square. Let me show it to you."

There in the trunk of his Dodge is the tool, laying among scattered piles of nuts and bolts and springs and washers. "I make a lot of my tools," Oscar remarks. From each metal mound he extracts evidence; a hand-forged center-punch; a fence-staple puller; a plumbing tool.

As he is rummaging, a woman drives up alongside and cuts her

motor.

"There's no water back at the house," she explains, "and the pump won't cut in."

"That's how they're s'posed to work," replies Oscar. They make 'em so they don't cut in unless they're drawing. Well . . . let's go take a look."

The next day Oscar is in his home-place workshop, describing the intricacies of making a flush-fitting fireplace screen. As he talks he squints his eyes and shifts one hinged screen in its outer frame. "I don't want that crack there between the two screens," he says, "'cause that fire just might jump out from betwixt 'em."

Oscar displays the "little old thing of a forge" he has built. "This hood of a thing here, that was an old water tank I reckon or maybe a washing machine . . . I don't know."

Oscar fashioned this new hood to replace one about "eat up with rust," but found that the new model fairly smoked him out of the shop. He experimented with the angle of the sheet metal leading up to the central flue but found that, though some improved, the hood still smoked with the blower on. Now Oscar has replaced the old constricted brick chimney with one of his own design.

"I done that here awhile back," Oscar reports. "Took a old-timey hot-water tank, y'know for a cook stove, cut the bottom out of hit, cut two holes in the side, knocked that brick flue down and put this thing up. It's got twelve-inch holes in it. Yeah, it draws better. Let's go out and take a peep at it."

"Get down boy!" Oscar says to his dog as we re-enter the shop. "This feller isn't here just to play with you."

Oscar grew up smithing.

"Right here is my Daddy's anvil," he states. "And it was my Grandpa's. And I think it was my great-Grandpa's—you can look right there and see how old it is."

As Oscar props his foot up on the base of the anvil his toe points to a date cast into its flank: "1885." He shifts and hunkers until his spare weight is settled where he wants it, then begins to recall his long association with the Campbell Folk School.



Route 1, Box 111  
Brasstown, North Carolina 28902

When Olive Dame Campbell and Marguerite Butler came to the area to found the school in November of 1925, they explained to the assembled population what they hoped to do, and asked everyone to pledge what labor and materials they could in support of the fledgling effort.

That was a hard winter, remembers Oscar, and on the third day of February he came to the school-site with a friend. "I wanted to see if I could work off part of my pledge and maybe make a little money," says Oscar. "Me and another man took a cross-cut saw, walked a little over a mile back up into the mountains, and cut board trees to build that museum with.

"They didn't have no chimney-builders until my brother, he'd pledged some too, and so me and him built one of the chimneys out of rock. When they got to the kitchen, why they wanted that chimney out of logs and sticks. Well, we didn't know how to do that so we got another man to show us how.

"We just worked right on. I chopped wood, kindling, helped around the house."

When a hand at the school farm quit in anger, Georg Bidstrup—who later became the school's director—hired Oscar.

"So, I worked on the farm for a year, a year-and-a-half, maybe two, before we got into the blacksmith work. Georg went out and bought three cows and I'd help him out on the milking. Carried the milk up to the farmhouse and separated it. Drawed water to wash the vessels with. I pumped it with a hand-pump. We didn't have no electric then.

"I just went from one thing to another until we got into . . . well, Georg wanted to have something in the wintertime so on bad days when we couldn't work out on the farm we'd have something to do. So we throw'd up a slab shed, three sides to it, and covered it. I worked in there, oh, year or so, building wagons, fixing wagons." Oscar describes one of their products: a wagon made out of an old "thrashing-machine," axles from a "T-model car," and wheels of Oscar's own manufacture. "But that wasn't a

*(continued on back)*

## OSCAR CANTRELL (1901- )/BLACKSMITH

satisfactory place to work." Oscar says of the open structure.

In the middle thirties Oscar finally got a shop of his own to work in. "Georg came around and said 'now we got to do something to make some money. How about making some candle stands.' I said all right, I'll try. That was in 1936. That was when the *artwork* came. 'Course I'd already made hinges and shod horses and everything before that, but that's when I got into this stuff.

"So I picked up a old horse-shoe and beat one point of the candlestand out of hit, and picked up an old cultivator point and made the base to hold it. I didn't have that cup. Didn't know how I'd make that. I picked up an old hoe-faucet (the cup which joins the hoe-blade to the handle) and made the holder out of *hit*. I had it all made and the boss come back around and he says, 'well, we can't buy hoes to make candlestands out of.' Then I had to go

a'figurin' on that, how to make them cups. Lemme show you the pattern I worked up."

By now Oscar has made countless items since "the artwork came in." One of the first, a set of andirons made in 1936 for a friend of Georg's lays on the bench among more recent work. Oscar points out where they have burned away in back and need repair, and then compares them to a set of irons he has just made. Where the legs on the newer model are welded to the bars that hold the firewood, the old andirons were made from a single bar of heavy steel; heated, split, and hammered into graceful curves.

"But I can't make 'em like that anymore," says Oscar. "I'm not strong enough. Hit takes a whole lot of beating to shape iron like that."



*Pottery, vase, circa 1938, height: 6"; cream pitcher, circa 1938, height: 4". (Not for Sale—Courtesy of Robert Conway) This is "Hilton Dogwood" pottery made by Ernest A. Hilton (1878-1948). Mr. Hilton was a native of Catawba County near Hickory and ran a shop west of Marion.*

**ROBERT CONWAY (1920- ) /COLLECTOR EXTRAORDINAIRE**



There is no way, in one photograph, to portray the scope and size of Bob Conway's craft collection. The fact that this picture of Bob with some of his carvings and pottery was taken in one corner of one room of a big house everywhere *full* of crafts, begins to tell the story.

Bob chose the Hilton pottery for the frontispiece photograph because it is rare, because it represents fine work by a well-respected and now-deceased North Carolina potter, and most of all, because he *likes* it.

History is Bob Conway's job. Even more, it is his *interest*. His life.

After managing the Vance birthplace for twelve years, Bob was named acting manager of the Thomas Wolfe Memorial when North Carolina acquired the writer's Asheville home as an historic site in 1974. As a representative of the North Carolina

Division of Archives and History, Bob helps with other projects throughout the state's western region. "Anytime anyone wants to set up a historical site or project or museum, I get involved," Bob states, substantiating with a lengthy list of far-flung deeds done.

All this isn't enough for Bob.

So, in an old house on a quiet street in Weaverville, Bob lives with "about a thousand" craft pieces and antiques. "They don't mean a thing to me unless I can share them," Bob says.

He does, every chance he can make. By now Bob's given programs in some two hundred mountain schools, and exhibited at state fairs, colleges—just about anywhere people might want to see his collection.

So that the sharing may go on, "I definitely want these things to go into some museum," says Bob.

"I've been to these estate sales and to me there's nothing more saddening than to see these things blown to the four winds.

"And I want these things to stay in the mountains," he adds emphatically.

When Bob started going to craft fairs in the early fifties, he already had a sizable antique collection. It was a good time for fairgoers, because back then many of the great craftspeople who have since retired or passed away were there at the fairs working with their full vigor. It was this—meeting the people behind the pieces—that started Bob collecting crafts.

"I got more and more interested because of the personal factor," he explains. "In other words, you know these people. Many of my crafts were made by friends and it's nice to sit here and know that. With an antique, frankly, you don't know who made it or where it came from or the age. Bob sees the mountain craftspeople as "a living link between the past and the present. Many of them are doing things similar to their ancestors. The

*(continued on back)*



22 Roberts Street  
Weaverville, North Carolina 28787

contemporary crafts are just fine," Bob concedes, "but I'm particularly partial to the traditional . . . I like woodcarving, wrought-iron, pewter, pottery, things like that."

Yet for all Bob's love of tradition in the artifacts, he sees his artisan friends as far more vital than quaint.

"I don't think the crafts mean anything without the craftsmen. It's a great thing to get to know them: I've worked with people from all over, and I honestly don't think there's a finer group anywhere than craftsmen. They seem to have a spirit of serenity."

In spite of the often solitary nature of the crafts themselves, Bob notes that the craftspeople "work together far better than any people I know. There doesn't seem to be a lot of backstabbing and throat-cutting. When they get together at the fairs it's just like they're one big happy family."

And obviously, one which Bob is honored to be a part of.

With a great energy of his own, Bob Conway celebrates the energy of others.



*Pottery, teapot, 1976, height: 8 3/4", flameware: white matte glaze and English bog-cane handle; skillet, 1976, diameter: 10", flameware: thrown bowl with extruded handle and white matte glaze. (Opening Bid Price—Teapot, \$24; Skillet, \$16)*

RON PROPST (1944- )/CERAMIST



*Pottery,  
Animal Creature,  
1975,  
length: 9",*

*white stoneware: thrown body, hand-constructed details,  
lithium blue glaze. (Opening Bid Price—\$24)*

"I design things not only that I like, but that I think have a reasonable chance of other people responding to visually, and wanting. Y'know I very seldom make things that haven't been

successful; successful for me visually, and successful for other people visually as shown by the fact that they wanted them. I enjoy this."

Ron Propst's family runs a furniture factory in Hickory, North Carolina-so Ron grew up in the environment of a going production business. "That feeling of seeing things being made and then shipped off to be *used* by people all over the place has always stayed with me," he comments.

Today, a howdy and a half from the Toe River, Ron Propst works away in the beautiful studio he designed himself. It's sunny; the plants (which abound here) are growing out loud and the banter among the potters today is distinctly warm and cheerful.

*(continued on back)*



Penland, North Carolina 28765

**RON PROPST (1944- )/CERAMIST**

Ron holds his verbal own, never losing touch with the flow of clay on the wheel. Each same-sized lump becomes a plate with absolute economy of motion. Neither boredom nor effort is apparent here. Rather, it is as though the plates make themselves within the space of Ron's hands.

What is it that suits one to production pottery? Where is the creativity in making objects that, at a glance, look identical—as though a human machine had made them?

Ron takes up the question without slowing the stream of ware from his wheel.

"I am a production potter," Ron states. "Not always, though. Sometimes we talk a lot, and don't get any production done.

"I have a deep belief that change comes with a continual involvement with the same thing. I could show you a mug that I made, say, in 1968. It's basically the same mug that I'm making now, but it's not the *same* mug. The mug is better now, more sophisticated. And I don't think unless I had continually made that mug and made that mug and *made* that mug, that it would have changed. I might have changed the mug completely, but I don't think the subtle change would have happened without that timespan."

Ron disagrees with those who will not make more than one object in the same form. "Let's say you make one mug that looks like . . . that can over there," he says pointing. "I don't believe that's the *best* mug like that you can make, the *one*.

"I don't believe I've ever progressed by making just one piece over one series. Most of these people who are making one-of-a-kind things are saying, 'well, I'm not a production potter—I work in series.' Well, I work in series—it's just I make *a lot* in each series. And let that piece progress through each series.

"This bowl over there," Ron says indicating a shelf of his work, "if I could show you a bowl I made two years ago, *this* bowl is much more sophisticated, probably even more *useful* than it was when I first started making it. My ability has grown over that timespan, so therefore the piece has progressed."

If Ron's mode of production is disciplined, his method of *design* borders on the whimsical.

"I can be just wheeling through a book," Ron says, "not any more thinking about anything than the man on the moon, and all of a sudden a reflection or a shadow will cross the page on a photograph and it's just like somebody had set a pot down in front of me. It's that clear. I could show it to you—but you wouldn't see it. It's funny. I've always had that ability, and that's basically how I do most of my designing.

One of Ron's pieces—a ceramic mirror-holder which projects out from the wall—is the potter's esthetic response to a friend's habit of taking off his glasses and cleaning them at arm's length. "I was just grooving on the changes that happen when you change your distance from a reflective surface," Ron explains.

Most such ideas ripen in Ron's sketchbook until they are compelling—or abandoned. But sometimes "the problem is that even though I see what I want to make and can draw it on a piece of paper, I don't yet know how to do it in clay. Then I just have to experiment until I can figure out how to make it. Ideas have to be harnessed to a high level of technique."

"Familiarity breeds contempt," someone once said, and the thought became a maxim. But for Ron Propst, the familiarity that comes with repeatedly producing a given form breeds respect. Towards his medium. For his skills. For himself.



Woodcarving  
full figure man and woman  
1975

height: 26½" (man), 26" (woman)

painted poplar

(Not for Sale—Courtesy of J. Roderick Moore)

S. L. JONES (1901- )/WOODCARVER

These carved figures come from the collection of J. Roderick Moore. Mr. Moore is active in many areas of folk and mountain culture, as a scholar, teacher, and collector. No mere consumer of artifacts, Roddy himself worked for a time as a skilled gunsmith at Williamsburg, restoring and manufacturing historical firearms.

In August of 1975, Roddy visited S. L. Jones and taped a long, friendly conversation with the carver about his life and work.

S. L. was born at Indian Mills, in Summers County, and spent boyhood in Marie and "a place they call Buck" on Wilt Creek. He describes a musical childhood among a family of thirteen in which "they could play some instruments, pretty near all of them, and they could all of them sing pretty good." S. L. still fiddles, as did his father.

The carpentry force of the C & O Railroad hired S. L. young. "I was supposed to be sixteen years old," he says, "but I wadn't quite that old." S. L. was promoted to bridge and building foreman in 1947, and stayed with the C & O line until his retirement in 1968.

Following are excerpts from Roddy's visit to S.L.'s home and workshop:

*Now you made a statement that you didn't start your woodcarving until really after you retired, but did you do anything before that time?*

Oh, yes, yes, I want to show you some here, that I did. (Holding up a carved picture-frame) I checked back and found that I had a little bit of talent back in the nineteen and forty. You see, I, I carved this here out. If you notice how all those clover leafs and leafs and grapes and vines and little things are placed.

*And then you say after you retired you really—*

Yeah, I got into it because that was my hobby, you know—carving and playing the fiddle, and I just kind of got in it in the big way, and then I got with this fellow over here at, uh, Pipestem Park, and, oh, I've learned a whole lot since I've been a-working over there, you know.

'Course I never did take any lessons, now. I never taken no lessons from anyone, I just picked it up myself, I'm self-taught. . . . .

Well, I just know, you see, I know the shape of a man's head, how it ought to be. And I have that in my mind and when I, oh, start out my work in a block of wood or anything I see that. That's what I see in this wood, you see. And I just carve all the wood away except what I seen in it.

And that's what I have. That's a . . . carving by imagination, you know. All that is done by imagination. I have nothing to go by.

*But don't you think back of someone you remembered or a place—?*

Well, I'll tell you what I think, uh, when I'm, when I'm a-looking at my wood and studying out what I'm a-gonna carve, I naturally would have somebody kindy in mind, you know, probably. And it'll more or less look like that person I had in my mind at the time I was starting my work.

I like to carve yellow poplar about the best of anything because it makes beautiful work. If you can get some that's clear of knots and, uh, some that's seasoned good, you can really carve out a nice piece of work.



*S. L. Jones in front of his workshop. You can almost see the train passing over a fresh-timber bridge on time.*

Hinton, West Virginia 25951

*Is the poplar any trouble to get now?*

Well, yes, it is. I've been a-getting some that was taken out of some old buildings, you know; they tear down old log cabins. My son lives right over here (next door). He's a contractor and he remodeled an old house up here next to Lowell—the old Graham house. There's quite a history behind it, because the Indians went there and captured a little girl and taken her off, you know, and killed some, some members of her family.

This piece of wood that I carved those heads out of that Phyllis Kind has in Chicago, that was taken from that building. T'was necessary that my boy remove some of the logs, you know, in order to make a change in the building. I don't know when I could ever find another piece of wood like that, but that was awful good wood to work.

*Well, what kind of finish are you putting on the pieces now?*

Well, I, I don't use much, I don't use much paint, unless, uh, now this fellow Hemphill he likes the paint.

But I always aim to leave enough portion of the body to show what kind of wood it is, you know, and not paint that. I aim to leave it the natural grain of the wood as near as I can.

*Your finish is so smooth. What do you use for your final finishing?*

Well, I do quite a bit of sanding. And then I. . . you can use a piece of glass and do some awful good scraping with it, you know, fresh broken.

(Roddy asks about how S.L. achieves the effect of hair on his figures. S.L. demonstrates, pounding:)

*Just take the file and strike it against the work?*

That's right, to make it look, look like wavy hair now. See, you can do a good job when the wood is already polished down. You can get all between these first lines and make it look like curls. So that's the way I do that.

For the teeth I use white enamel paint. That's the nearest thing I can get to it, you know, it makes it look more like teeth.

*What about the coloring? I notice in some of the faces there's coloring.*

*(continued on back)*

**S. L. JONES (1901- )/WOODCARVER**

Well, sir, I use, uh, a little piece of pastel, just enough to blend it, to make it give a flesh look. Most of the eye work is done with those colored pencils. It does a real good job, too. Puts a gloss on it and it'll stay, it'll never change it's color.

*Well, let me ask you something, and this might be a little touchy, but I'm curious. Now that you're becoming . . . people from Michigan and New York and all over are calling you to get your work, how's this going to affect your prices?*

Well, uh, I don't know. I, I've sold a lot of my stuff too cheap. Now there's a fellow that came from Washington to down here, an attorney-at-law. Well, that fellow fell in love with one of my pieces just as soon as he saw it. And he says, "what do you want for that?" And I just off handed said "a hundred and fifty dollars." He said "I'll take it." He gave me \$150 for that piece of work. But, I find that people, if they want a piece of work, they don't regard the price.

Now I've been a-selling, uh, I sold you two nice pieces and I, I really think I sold them to you a little too cheap, but nevertheless that's all done. But, uh—

*So you're adjusting your prices to your popularity then?*

Well, not necessarily.

*Or to the demand?*

If, if I carve a piece of work and people likes it, they're willing to pay for it, why, there's nothing wrong with me pricing it up there.

*It's certainly not. That's called supply and demand, and well, the reason I was interested is, because a lot of times somebody will buy your work and carry it off somewhere and well it for a lot more money than you've made.*

Yeah, that's happened a lot of times, you know.

*So, I'm interested in seeing the adjustment down here. Now, this is none of my business, but if somebody from, say, Washington came and looked at that piece of work and liked it and if you had a neighbor that came to see that piece of work and liked it, would it be the same price?*

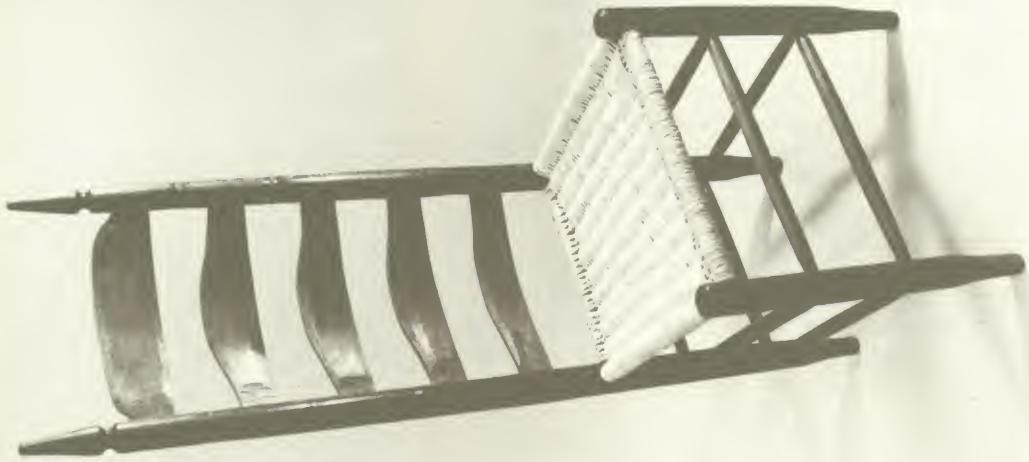
Yeah, I never change the prices on nobody. I have no picks, no pets.

*Do you think the people here in Hinton appreciate your work?*

Well, I believe they do, I believe they do. You see, I've displayed a lot of it down at the Water Festival, and (pointing) I had all this work down there. I got the blue ribbon for that fellow there, and, I've got the blue ribbon at the State Fair on him.

Chairmaking,  
handmade ladderback chair with cornshuck bottom,  
circa 1910,  
height: 48",  
walnut and twisted cornshuck.

(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild)



**SHADRACH MACE (1892—1973)/CHAIRMAKER**



Today the Guild has more than five hundred individual and center members and provides services to over 2,000 persons. As stated in the Certificate of Incorporation, its purposes are:

- (1) To seek cooperation among all agencies and individuals interested in conserving and developing the handicrafts of the Southern Mountains.
- (2) To encourage a wider appreciation of mountain crafts.
- (3) To raise and maintain standards of design and craftsmanship, and encourage individual expression.
- (4) To study costs of production, marketing, and other problems concerning crafts.
- (5) To give information and instruction on methods, sources of supply, and management of individual or group production.

Central headquarters are in a modern 8,000 square-foot office building in Oteen, North Carolina. The structure houses administrative offices, warehouse and storage space, conference rooms, an audio-visual room for the library and slide collection, a mailing room, darkroom, additional space for special projects and craft workshops—and a devoted, enthusiastic staff.

“Craft education is the key to the Guild’s continuing success,” their pamphlet notes brightly. “New craftsmen must be trained; producing craftsmen must constantly improve their work. Guild-sponsored workshops give old and new craftsmen

guidance in design and workmanship. Seminars bring together Guild members and outstanding craftsmen for sessions of inspiration and exposure to new ideas and methods. Conferences, involving leaders in crafts, business, and other fields, work out guidelines for the future. Scholarships give craftsmen help in personal development, and buy new books and materials.

“The Guild’s growing library of books, pictures, movies and slides is available for use by civic groups, schools, craftsmen, and other organizations. Exhibits of member’s finest work travel throughout the country, and members teach and demonstrate their craft in many places. The annual Craftman’s Fairs offer exhibits and demonstrations for the benefit of both craftsmen and the general public.”

Happily, the Guild does not subscribe to the theory that “if you ain’t born with it, you ain’t got it.” Persons applying for active (producing) membership must submit five recent pieces to the jury of the Standards Committee. Rejected applicants are offered help in bringing their work up to Guild standards.

All these educated craftspeople need markets.

The Guild operates four retail outlets—two in Asheville; one in Blowing Rock, North Carolina; and the fourth in Bristol, Virginia. Two annual craft fairs are held: the Asheville fair on the *second Monday* in July; and a fair in Gatlinburg, Tennessee on the *third Tuesday* in October.

Warehouse space in the Guild’s new offices has also made possible a wholesale program, wherein Guild member’s work is available to a select group of outside shops. There is no conflict between good art and good business here.

The Guild does both.

Shadrach Mace lived near Mars Hill, North Carolina, where his family made chairs since the Civil War. It was only natural that Shadrach would pick up his father's craft, and being only natural, Shadrach did.

His nickname, "Birdie," functioned as a barometer between father and son. When Copenny said the whole name Shadrach



(Photo by Paul Brezny)

knew he was safe—but if he shortened it to "Bird" Shadrach knew he had to light out or be lit on fire.

"Birdie" it no doubt was when younger Mace saved his father's trade.

"I was forced into the chair business," Shadrach explained, "when another man was about to force my daddy out. I said I could do as much work as anybody. And I did. I didn't see Mars Hill for five or seven years. After the other man quit making chairs, I quieted down a little bit."

Even "quieted down," Shadrach stayed with it.

His tools were traditional: a maul, a froe, a drawhorse and draw-knife, a "turnin'-lay" lathe. No glue held his work together. Expertise did that—the knack of matching dry rungs to half-green rounds: fresh enough to shrink tight but not so green that they'd shrink too much and split. Maple, walnut, cherry and hickory were the chairmaker's staples, with hickory the favorite "because if you sent a man out to find arry wood better'n hickory, I don't reckon he'd ever come back."

The world went through some changes in Shadrach's career, and Shadrach changed with it. For one thing, there was a time when Shadrach could hire out the job of chair-bottoming, tie address tags to his finished chairs, and ship them out that way. Welfare killed the chair-bottomers off, claimed Shadrach, and stiffer shipping regulations forced him to find a source of giant cartons.

He surmounted all such setbacks.

Perhaps the greatest transformation, though, was the change that saw Shadrach go from a man who didn't see town in "five or seven years" to a public figure who held craft fair audiences in sway with his skill and boundless good nature. "I was afearied to death when they first asked me to come to the fair," Shadrach once said, "but shucks, it's just like talking to folks in the barn."

Shadrach is well-remembered by all who shared his company. More than a craftsman, he was a witcivist, orator, diplomat and

*(continued on back)*

## SHADRACH MACE (1892—1973)/CHAIRMAKER

sage.

At the heart of it all was a self-respect based not on vanity but the simple recognition of deeds well done.

“When you buy my cheers,” Shadrach used to tell his customers, “you’re through buying cheers.”



*Metal sculpture,  
duck,  
1934,  
height: 3 1/2",  
shaft section from steam-powered diamond-bitted rock drill.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artist)*

W. P. HAMILTON (1895- )/BLACKSMITH

# SHAVINGS



As Hamilton selects the pieces he will lend to the exhibit he recalls their making.

"That copper vessel is better than fifty years old," he states. "It's made from sheet copper and an iron pipe nipple. Not too many can work copper like that, 'cause you got to keep heating it and letting it cool while you hammer it to keep the temperature just right."

"I made those horse-shoe ornaments in 1968. I was working at a fair and a woman brought her horse to me and asked me to shoe him. That wasn't no cheap horse either—that was a \$6,000 horse. She asked me to make something out of the old shoes and I made these," he says, holding his unique horseshoe sculptures. "I guess we must have lost each others's address 'cause I never did hear from her after that."

Like much of his artwork, Hamilton's duck has emerged from more proletarian labor. It was 1934, and Hamilton was working on a drilling crew for the city of Bluefield. One day a steam-powered diamond-bitted rock-drill broke. Hamilton's foreman complained that the twenty-foot shaft would have to be shipped North for repairs at a cost of \$20 and three weeks lost time.

"I'll fix it," Hamilton offered against the foreman's certainty that the drill could not be fixed without a special annealing machine. "Just give me six men and a day's time."

The foreman agreed, and offered Hamilton the twenty-dollar repair fee if he was successful.

He was. This bird, made from the small shaft section removed



*Metal sculptures, horseshoes, 1968, height: 2";  
vessel, circa 1925, height: 3",  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Artist)*

to form a new mating surface, is Mr. Hamilton's metal celebration of that day. "Look here," he says, pointing to a welded-over hole in the bird's breast, "this is where the steam came out of that drill shaft."

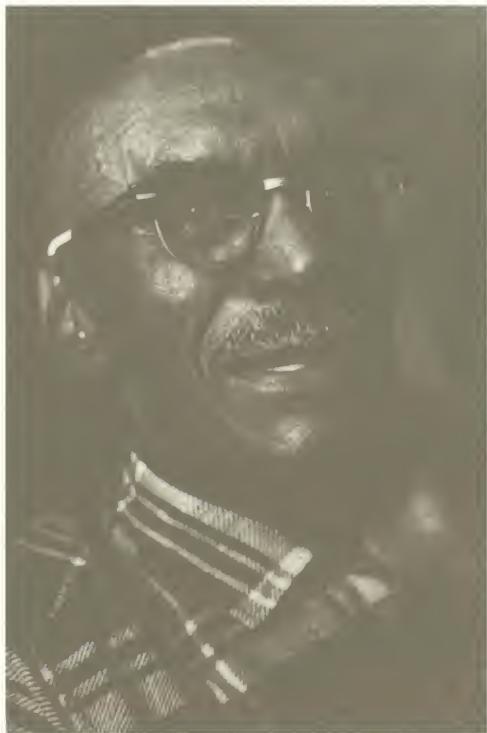
Hamilton remembers Bluefield as a swamp when he first arrived so long ago. On what had been the worst of this mire, an old hotel still stands. One of Hamilton's first local jobs was forging the iron bands which girded this structure's foundation pilings and kept them from spreading as they were driven into the earth.

"There's very few people in this town who know that I'm the one who did that work," says Hamilton.

At some point in each of his stories, Hamilton-the-storyteller steps back a few paces from Hamilton-the-smith, regards the latter's work, and pronounces it good. The truth of this judgement pleases them both as no empty boasting could.

W.P. Hamilton is together.

Even at eighty, little strain shows. His movements are smooth, his comments quick and keen. On this blustery winter night he sits warm in his hilltop house, as tranquil as his slippers on the carpet.



203 South Spring Street  
Bluefield, West Virginia 24701

Life has been good to W.P. Hamilton because Hamilton has always known how.

Mr. Hamilton is a blacksmith—one who could shoe the roughest horse and then beat the old shoes into flowers. Literally.

“He’s the only man I know who makes wrought-iron roses,” a friend says of him. That he does, along with wrought-iron television stands, lamps, tools, toys, and even snakes. Mrs. Hamilton, who is mortally afraid of serpents, keeps these last hidden under a dustcloth, but she will display them with a wrinkled nose to guests. They are fine metal snakes.

A correspondence course gave Hamilton his start. He absorbed its lessons so well that even today he can scan its soiled diagrams with his finger and explain just what they all mean, without recourse to the captions. As he leafs through the aged book he speaks of the various problems a farrier encounters and how they are solved. “There’s a whole lot to it, a lot to it,” he remarks more than once.

“A lot of people think that as long as you get a shoe on a horse, it don’t matter. But you got to get it *right*—if you don’t they’ll go lame.

“I was working at a fair one time when a fellow came up and said ‘Hamilton, watch my horse. He ain’t going right. He’s off somewhere.’ Alright, I’ll watch, I told that man.

“I just keep on working, y’know, beatin’ on my anvil. That man come back he say ‘Hamilton, god dammit you ain’t lookin’ at my horse, you just out here workin’.’ “I say, well, your horse is off in his right front foot. His heel’s too low.

“That horse went around and that man say ‘That’s just like you said. How’d you know when you didn’t even look at him?’ ”

“I say, well, I will. Bring him down here. Now you get off of him and let your trainer take him.

“That horse went around and that man say ‘That’s just like you said. How’d you know when you didn’t even look at him?’ ”

*(continued on back)*

**W. P. HAMILTON (1895- )/BLACKSMITH**

Hamilton laughs and explains that his trick was to watch the rider's head. The rider moves with the horse—the horse favors his ailing foot—and in the rider's bobbing head the story is told.

"I've never failed," Hamilton smiles.

"You know, horses are smart, smarter than a lot of people. If they weren't you couldn't train 'em." Hamilton feels that the horses he worked on came to know him. "Yes sir," he asserts, "They know you by an instinct."

One of Hamilton's clients bought "Duke" for his twelve-year-old daughter. Duke was said to be a killer, and the family kept him on a tight reign. Whenever Duke was shod they bound him immobile.

Then Hamilton was called in to shoe Duke, and he remembers the horse watching his every move.

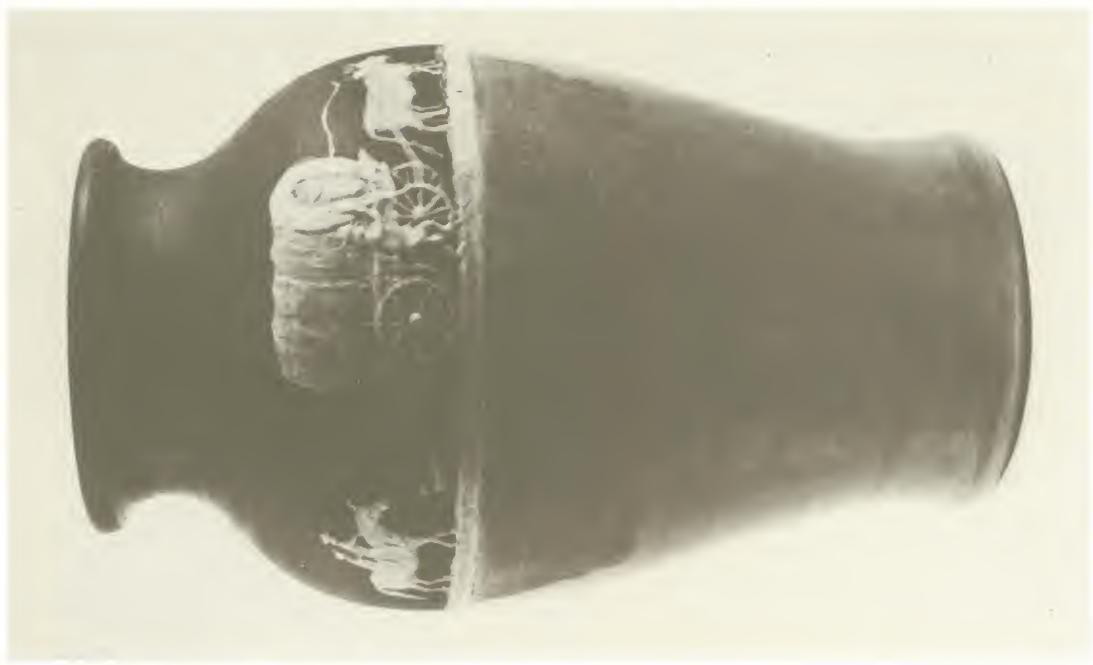
"rectly he went to whinnying and bucked up. I told that girl

'you just drop that rope. Duke ain't gon' do nothin'.'

Hamilton moved in and started stroking Duke's chest and shoulders, then gently picked up his front hoof and tapped it with a hammer. He moved to Duke's hindquarters, tapped a hoof there too, and then walked around behind the great horse, close-in.

"He pulled down his tail like he was gonna kick, but he didn't. He just watched me. You see, Duke had been owned by horse traders and they used to fight with him and beat him. So he was used to putting up a fight every time someone came near. That's why he watched everybody so close. Once he saw I wasn't going to fight back he was all right. After that, every time I wanted to shoe him, I'd come up to him and pat him a little bit, talk to him, pick up his foot and tap it a couple times, and then just walk on and get my tools.

"He never did give me no trouble."



Pottery,  
porcelain cameo vase,  
1938,  
height: 9",  
porcelain and porcelain paste.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild)

WALTER B. STEPHENS (1876-1961)/POTTER



Milepost 382 on the Blue Ridge Parkway is the site of the Guild's most ambitious project. Here, in the Asheville area that has been and is yet such a locus for mountain handicrafts, a permanent folk art center will be built.

As it is now, you need a calendar, a car and a good pair of walking shoes to scratch the surface of mountain culture. Music festivals are here and there; old farm tools somewhere else; weaving three ridges yonder; books scattered through far-flung shelves. That will continue, as it should—local outbursts and caches of culture reflect the mountain way of life so grounded in kin and locale. Yet with the completion of the Southern Highland Folk Art Center, some part of all of this will also be in one place.

Architectural plans include a 300-seat auditorium, a museum, an extensive library, a craft sales shop, information center, a craft and exhibit work area. No building full of *things* alone, the Guild emphasizes, the whole of mountain folk life will be celebrated here in music, dance, and other ongoing activities. Visitors will be urged to participate.

Robert Gray, the Guild's director, sees the center as far more than a pleasant diversion. "More than any other art form, the crafts best express our American tradition and the spirit of the American people," he says. "This creative outlet is more than fun—it's a vital necessity."

This writer is not sure just exactly what best expresses "the American tradition and the spirit of the American people." Plurality, maybe—in this Bicentennial year of so many folks out trying to corner the elusive essence of the old Stars and Bars, all seem to find it in their figurative backyard.

But when Robert Gray speaks of the vital necessity for participation, he hits the nail on the head—er, ah . . . gently drives the seasoned rung into the half-green round.

For we are awash in a sea of objects produced without joy and consumed without significance. We have more and more that is worth less and less to us. What do we know anymore about the things that surround our lives—who made them and how?

Enter those who still own whole process.

Those who can see a tree and hear a ringing note. Who can shape wet earth and bake it watertight and strong. Who survey their growing corn from a seat of last year's twisted shucks.

Whose minds and hands are friends.

Their skills, no longer as essential to daily life, are important again because we need to be reminded of our possibilities. That's why—with no intent to demean their work—I propose that in their *choices* and not their potential may these artisans differ from the rest of us.

Involvement is not obsolete, they say.

Joy is important.

We possess the power to create wonder.

And *this*

(they express in their work)

is what people can do.

"We're not a-workin' down there today," Mrs. Case calls down to the kiln-house. "Everything that's finished is up here in the shop. You're welcome to come up and have a look."



(Photo by Ed Dupuy)

I'm not exactly looking for *pottery*, I explain—the Southern Highland Handicrafts Guild has lent us one of Mr. Stephens' vases. What I'm interested in is information about Mr. Stephens.

Walter Stephens' daughter-in-law is cautious. Who is this stranger? What does he want?

"Well, there's some stuff about him in some of them art books in the library."

"I . . . I was hoping to talk to someone who knew him."

Born in Clinton, Iowa, Walter travelled to Nebraska as a young boy in a covered wagon. That's why he liked to decorate his pottery with covered wagons, says Mrs. Case, "because he remembered 'em from his childhood."

The Stephens' family next moved to a farm in Caperville, Tennessee. Walter's mother was an artist and teacher, and soon she and Walter "began to fool with the clay on the place."

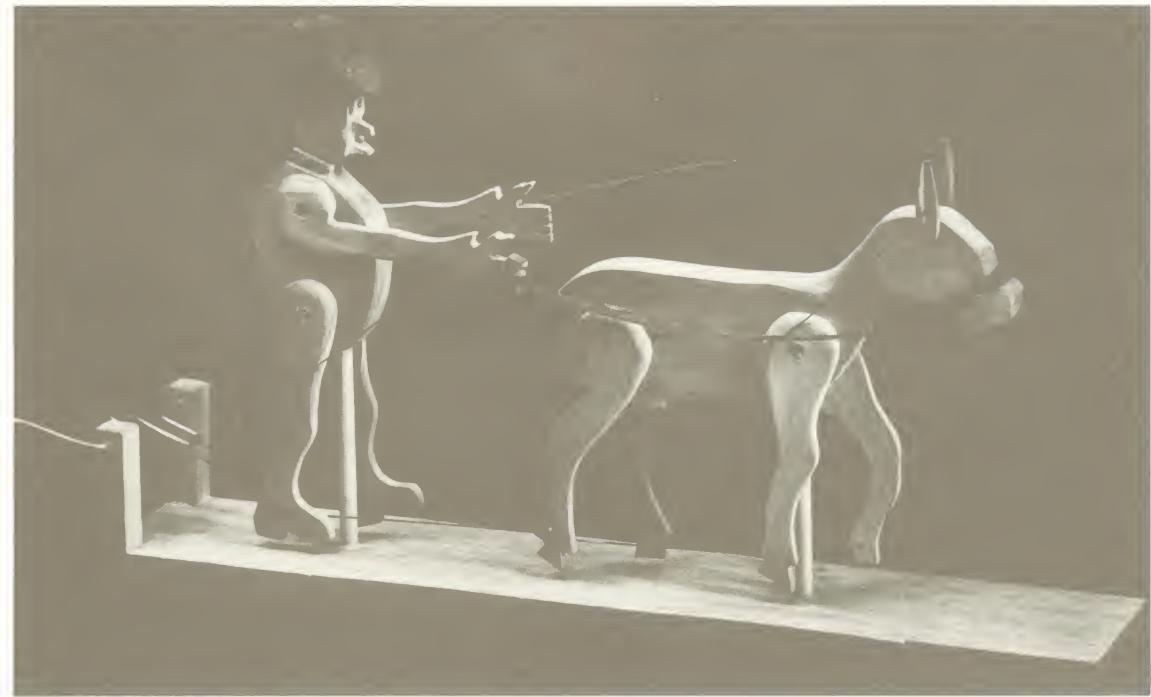
When Walter was "about twelve" he came to Tennessee, and in the 1920's built the Pisgah Forest Pottery where his grandson Thomas Case (and Mrs. Case) still work today.

An early riser, Walter generally worked until five or five-thirty and passed his evenings reading. He liked to read history books and that—not his own outdoor life—is why he often used Daniel Boone or deer hunting motifs, says Mrs. Case.

The evening before Walter's fatal stroke, he finished decorating a sugar bowl and a cream pitcher.

"Working here was Mr. Stephens' life," Mrs. Case quietly asserts. "That's all I know to tell you."

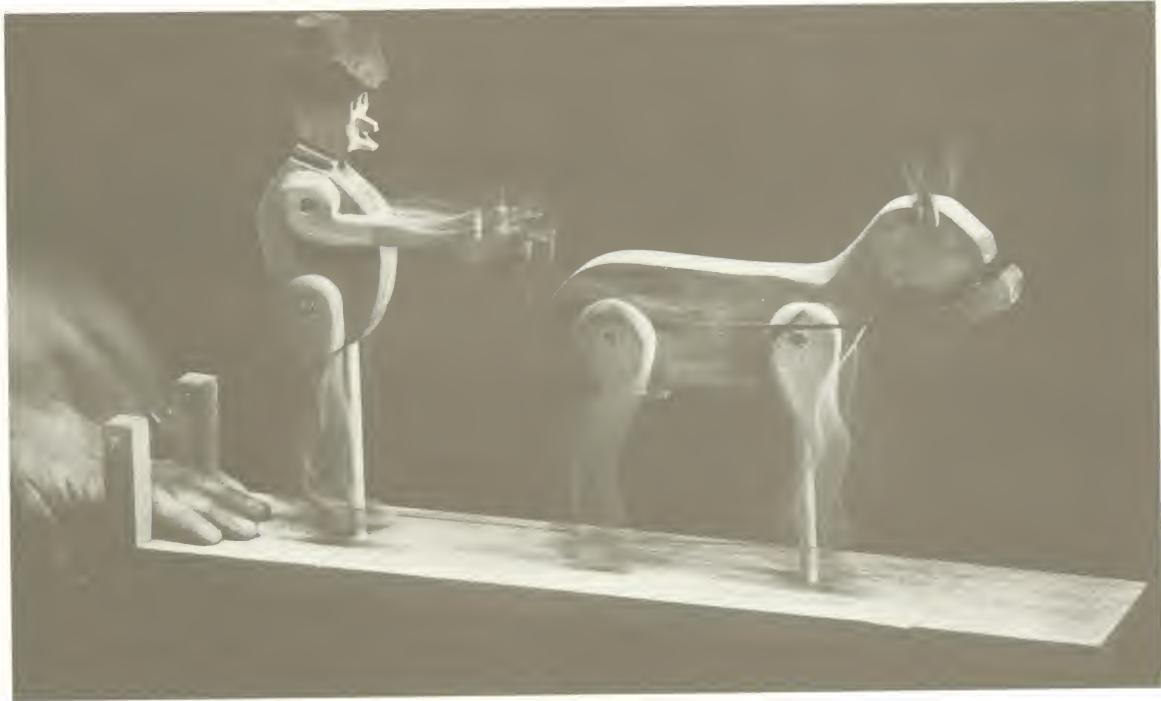
## WALTER B. STEPHENS (1876-1961)/POTTER



*Woodworking,  
mountain toys,  
Walking Mule,  
1975,*

*height: 13", length: 23",  
walnut and pine.  
(Not for Sale—Courtesy of David Gaynes)*

**WILLARD WATSON (1905- ) WOODWORKER/MOUNTAIN TOYS**



"If anyone would have told me when I first started making this here crafting that it'd be the headache it is sometimes I woulda thowed every knife I have away and quit. But I'm into it now. I've got so many places that wants just exactly what I make, and I'm the only man now that makes exactly what I make. There's

not nigh another craftsman that makes them walking mules . . . there *has* been a few craftsmen who make the pecking chickens but they've all been rougher'n' a cob. If I go to make anything it's got to suit me and then it'll suit the public. Now that's just what kind of fellow Willard is."



Route 3, Box 69  
Deep Gap, North Carolina 28618

By his own estimation, Willard Watson is a man "What can't hardly be whipped by a piece of wood."

"I stayed in the woods twenty years or better," Willard says. "If I could take it I'd go back to the woods yet. It was borned in me. I always loved to work in the woods, loved good timber. I love to see a pretty forest as good as any man you ever looked in the face of."

"We didn't have nothin' but them old crosscut saws back then. Me and my partner had an old big heavy saw and couldn't nobody ever *do* nothin' with it but us. Now there was a saw-filer around here and he could file one too. One day he said to me 'Willard, I'm gonna file that saw of yours.' It was a full fish-bellied Simons.

"He filed that thing and I'm telling you what's the truth it was hard to pull but boy they would go down. . . . they *would* go down and we used it right on from then on.

"You ever been over to that Powderhorn Mountain? My wife was born over there. Well, we come out on top over there to a place called Muddy Branch. Fellow we was cuttin' for, we'd get twenty-five cents an hour—two dollars and a half a day and board. But you could buy more with that then than you for twenty-five dollars today.

"We went over there and the old man said 'Boys, if you'll cut that in so many days I'll give you an extra day's pay and we'll have a home chicken dinner.'

"Well, the land laid perfect. We took the low end of that land and the pines run anywhere from two-and-a-half to three-foot through. There wasn't nobody to watch over us or aggravate us. We run a scale-stick behind us and every time ten hours passed, twelve-thousand board-feet of timber fell behind us."

"My partner was tough and so was I," Willard says. That's what it took.

*(continued on back)*

"Hot—lawd-a-mercy I've worked along in July and August when the timber had *burnt*, not a shade tree or nothin' left to hide under. That's hard work, yessir. They don't come nothin' more harder than pullin' at a crosscut saw. There's been many a man died ahold of a crosscut saw and din't know what killed him."

Though Willard is out of the woods these days he keeps right on making sawdust. He is a toymaker now.

"If you're going to do a thing and do it right, you've got to stay with it," says Willard.

"I'll tell you, in working this wood, you've *got* to have patience. There'll be one day out of the week when a piece won't do right. There's no use a-gittin' mad and there's no use a-keepin' on. You might just as well lay it down and walk away."

When that happens, Willard is liable to try sneaking up on it in the night.

"I'll get out of bed of a mornin' and whatever it is on my mind, why that's what I'll make that day. I work best that way. I've gotten up many a morning at one o'clock. Wake up, can't sleep, go down and build me a fire and go to work. Work on 'til maybe four, five o'clock, go back to bed, rest awhile, get up and go again. Going to bed and gettin' up don't worry me none, naw, I've always been like that."

Willard disappears and quickly returns with an armload of good dry firewood which he lays against the blackgum backlog in the great fireplace. He sits back down in his wood-heated wooden

house full of his woodworking and talks about . . . wood.

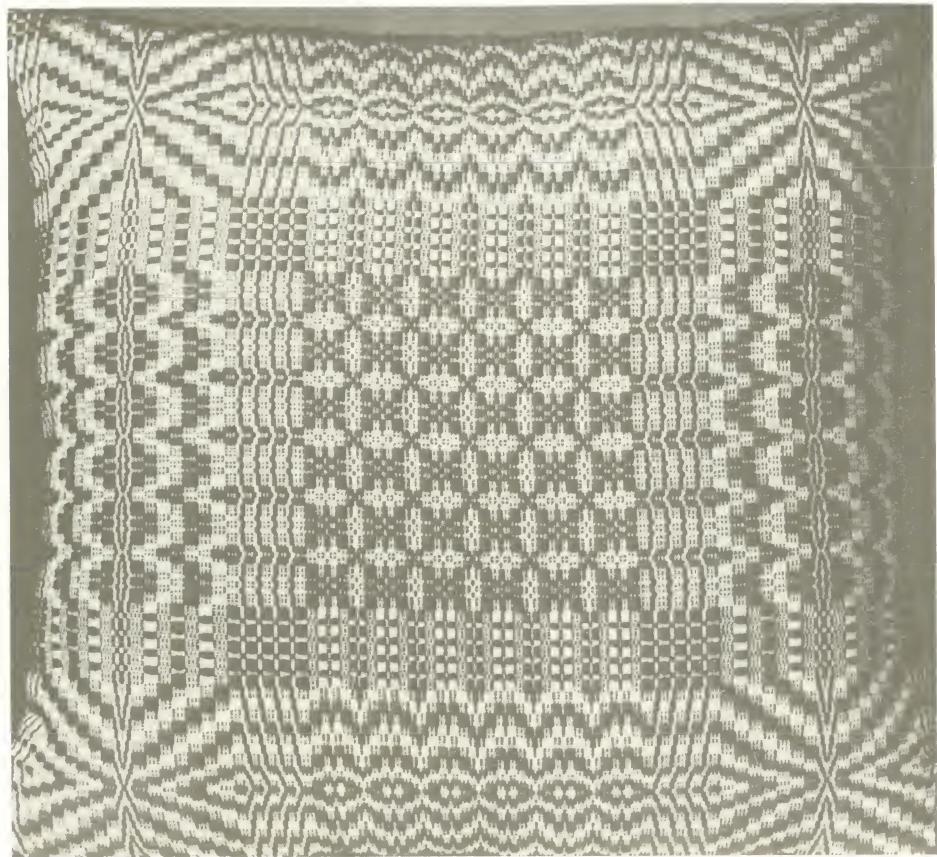
In his long life Willard has done everything with wood from felling great timber to whittling tiny chicken-beaks, and done all of it well.

"You know what one of the finest things in the world for a human being is?" Willard asks now.



"I'll tell you—a satisfied mind."

*Weaving,  
Lee's Surrender Pillow,  
1974,  
15" x 15",  
virgin wool and cotton warp.  
(Opening Bid Price—\$25)*



© 1990 The Estate of Wilma McNabb

**WILMA MCNABB (1896- ) /WEAVER**



*Mrs. McNabb's bedroom: The artist's eye seeks beauty beyond the loom.*

Wilma McNabb lives surrounded by her own history. The house in which she lives is the same dwelling that, with one brief interlude, she has lived in all her life. Twenty-three children have been raised here, Wilma's thirteen brothers and sisters among them. Someday, Wilma hopes, her own son will bring his family down from the cold North and back to this place.



*"I used to knit all the time, but since I learned to weave it's just a little sideline with me. I like the weaving much better."*

Route 2, Box 328

Murphy, North Carolina 28906

A picture here from 1920 shows Wilma's grandmother flanked by a spinning wheel and a treadle machine. She sits at ease on the wooden porch, nursing a pipeful of the same homegrown tobacco that Wilma's father used to mix with fig leaves and mail to customers in the western states. Wilma's grandmother was a weaver, as was Wilma's mother. So when Wilma sits down at her loom in the window-lit corner, she plies a craft not altogether strange to her family.

"But I reckon I'm the first one ever to weave things for people outside the family," Wilma says. "My mother made blankets—she never did fool with coverlets—too many children to knit for and weave. I have two blankets I made when I was just a child."

"We wore home-made jeans, too," her husband Clyde offers.

"That's right, we did," says Wilma, and adds that they were much like the jeans of today. But where today's jeans are all cotton or even cotton-synthetic blends, the jeans of Wilma's childhood were woven of pure wool on a cotton warp, making a tough, durable fabric called "linsey."

For awhile, Wilma's own weaving came in fits and starts.

"I remember helping Mother with the last warp she put on," says Wilma, "we had our warp frames here in the backyard."

The family gave this loom to the John C. Campbell Folk School soon after that institution was founded in 1925. The loom rests there now in the school's log-built museum a few miles from Wilma's house.

In 1936 Wilma took a TVA sponsored weaving course, but still had no loom of her own to progress on.

Finally, in 1947 the Cherokee County Crafters club was set up. They soon purchased five looms, one of which became Mrs. McNabb's. I paid for it the first year," she smiles, "weaving luncheon sets."

The Cherokee County Crafters are still meeting, and Wilma is still weaving. In a great cedar chest at the foot of her bed are a number of Wilma's weavings, sharing the dark fragrant space

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with twenty-six blue ribbons they have won over the years. Yet despite these ribbons Wilma is modest about her abilities.

"I can't make pictures in my weaving like that Alice Tipton," she says, "and I can't just look at a pattern and analyze it the way someone like Ruth Jelks can. There's mistakes in a lot of my weaving, and a weaver could find it. I sent a pillow off one time to a state fair, I couldn't see the mistake in it. And they sent it back without anything on it—maybe a third prize or something—and showed me a mistake in the weaving."

Steeped as she is in weaving history, Wilma knows nothing of the history of the "Lee's Surrender" pattern that she has rendered so vibrantly here in this pillow. "I always did wonder about it though, how it came to have that name," she remarks.

Anyone who can shed some light on this question might write Mrs. McNabb. She would appreciate that.

"It *oughta* be awful pretty," is all Wilma can say as she appraises the pillow.

"Lee had an awful hard time to surrender!"